

No. 1071

APRIL 9, 1926

Price 8 Cents

# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**STRIKING-IT-RICH;**  
OR, FROM OFFICE BOY TO MERCHANT PRINCE. *BY A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"How dare you accuse me of theft?" cried the young woman, flashing an indignant look at the boy. "Because you have the goods under your coat, madam," replied Joe Sturgess, coolly. The lady's escort raised his cane to strike the boy.



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## STRIKING IT RICH

### OR FROM OFFICE BOY TO MERCHANT PRINCE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

#### CHAPTER I.—Joe Sturgess Makes the Acquaintance of Seton Hall

"Hello, sonny! Do you live around here?" Joe Sturgess, a sturdy, bright-eyed lad, who was sunning himself close to the water, on the Charles River side of the city of Boston, one Sunday morning, looked up and saw a fairly well-dressed man of average build, with a reddish mustache, regarding him attentively.

"I do," replied Joe.

"Know a man by the name of Bently Morse?" Joe looked keenly at his questioner. Bently Morse was his stepfather, and he wasn't an ornament of the family. He was a lazy, good-for-nothing kind of man, who drank more than was good for him at times. Morse had a standing grouch against the world, which he claimed was not treating him with the consideration due a person of his abilities, and he tried to get square by making the world support him without any effort on his part as a producer.

In his opinion the good things of life were not fairly apportioned. It made him mad to see well-to-do people riding in their carriages and automobiles, and living in fine houses surrounded by green and well-kept lawns of more or less extent. He argued that they were no better than he, and consequently had no right to luxuries denied himself. If he had his rights, he asserted, he would be at the head of some bank, or big store, or factory, or other money-making enterprise, and be able to hold his head up with the best in the land. As the case stood he was obliged to put up with a cheap unpainted two-story dwelling, facing a small dreary-looking yard which he made no effort to improve, on a shabby side street.

The duty of supporting the family consequently devolved on his wife, who did dress-making, and his stepson, who was office boy in a large dry goods house on Washington street. Morse was not ashamed to live off their small earnings, though he was constantly putting up a big bluff about what he expected to do in the near future. When he connected with a job where his talents would be appreciated, he told his wife, he would go to work; but he didn't propose to give his valuable time to anybody for nothing.

Mrs. Morse was a meek and gentle woman who

had long since ceased to argue the matter with her shiftless husband. She accepted her unfortunate lot in life and did the best she could under the circumstances. His son Joe had sized his stepfather up correctly and had a very poor opinion of him as a man. The only thing that could be said in his favor was that he did not ill-treat his wife, even when intoxicated; but he had a lofty and exasperating way of enforcing his authority that was not pleasant to the family.

"Yes," replied Joe to the stranger who had accosted him, "I know Bently Morse. He is my stepfather."

"Indeed," replied the sandy-featured man, looking at the boy with interest and curiosity. "So Morse is your stepfather?" Joe nodded as if the fact did not afford him great satisfaction.

"Ever hear him speak of Seton Hall?" The boy shook his head.

"That's strange," replied the man. "I used to work with your father when he was clerk for the Boylston Bank. We are old chums."

"Are you Seton Hall?"

"That's my name," answered the man, as though he expected that Joe would be greatly impressed by the fact.

"I suppose you wish to be directed to our house?" said Joe.

"I do."

"I will show you the way."

"All right," said the man. "How is my friend Morse getting along?" he continued as they walked up the street together.

"Not very well," replied Joe.

"I'm sorry to hear it. What's the matter?"

"He doesn't care to work," replied the boy bluntly.

"Why not? Is he living on his money?"

"No. He's living on mother and I." Seton Hall rubbed his chin and looked hard at his young companion.

"Is he unable to work?" he asked.

"He's able enough, but he can't find a situation to suit him."

"Oh, I see. He doesn't want to lower himself in the eyes of the world. Well, I can't say that I blame him. I shouldn't care to accept a plebeian position myself."

"Are you still working for the Boylston Bank?" asked Joe, curiously.



"Ahem! No. I resigned from the bank some time ago. At present I am a gentleman of leisure." Mr. Hall said it in a tone intended to convey the impression that it wasn't necessary for him to work unless he felt like it. Joe was not deceived. He was a pretty shrewd boy. He judged that Mr. Hall was suffering from the same complaint as his step-father.

"How long is it since you saw Mr. Morse?" he asked.

"I haven't seen him in a considerable time. Why do you call him Mr. Morse? He's your father, isn't he?"

"He's my step-father."

"That's all the same."

"No, it isn't."

"Don't you and he get along well together?"

"I didn't say that we didn't."

"I should infer from your manner." Joe remained silent.

"Do you rent the house where you live or does your—ahem!—step-father own it?"

"We pay rent every month. About all that Mr. Morse owns is his clothes."

"I suppose you help support the house?"

"I do."

"Where do you work?"

"At Henderson's department store on Washington street."

"What do you do?"

"I'm in the office."

"Do you run errands and sweep out?"

"I run errands and do other work, but we have porters to sweep the place out."

"I apprehend that your wages are not large?"

"No, I don't receive as much as the superintendent."

"You seem inclined to be witty," replied Seton Hall, disapprovingly.

"I answered your question, didn't I?"

"After a fashion you did. How much do you get?"

"I don't think you've any right to ask that question."

"Does your mother work, too?"

"She does dressmaking. If Mr. Morse did his duty she would not be obliged to take in work. I think every man ought to support his family."

"I won't say you're not right, young man; but no man should be expected to take a position below his natural station in life."

"Suppose he can't get just what suits him, do you think he should remain idle and starve?"

"I think his family ought to come to his rescue."

"That's all right if a man is sick, or can't work for some physical reason, but Mr. Morse can't fall back on any such excuse. He's strong and hearty. If I was in his place I'd be willing to clean the streets till I could find something better to do," said Joe, sturdily.

"My friend, Morse is a gentleman, and gentlemen do not stop to cleaning the streets."

"I suppose you consider yourself a gentleman, too?"

"Undoubtedly, young man. My family was one of the best in Boston at one time," said Seton Hall, loftily.

"What happened to your family? Had hard luck?"

"My family is non sum qualis eram."

"What's that?" asked Joe.

"Latin."

"What does it mean?"

"Freely translated it means we are not what we were."

"Why couldn't you have said it in plain English, then I'd have understood you?"

"It was merely a lapsus linguae, that is, a slip of the tongue."

"Are you a college graduate?"

"Ahem! Not exactly; but I attended one of the more select schools in the State."

"I suppose you are well educated, then?"

"Few better, young man," replied Seton Hall, pompously. "I ought to be Governor of the State, or even President of the United States. I flatter myself that I would lend a lustre to either position. Some men, however, never attain the exalted places for which they are peculiarly fitted."

"You have my sympathy," replied Joe dryly. Mr. Hall looked at him suspiciously, but the boy's face was perfectly sober.

"This is rather a shabby street," said Hall, as they turned into a narrow and not over-clean thoroughfare. "Do you reside in this vicinity?"

"We live in the third house from the corner on this side." Seton Hall viewed the Morse dwelling with evident tokens of disapproval.

He was disappointed. Being in hard luck himself, owing to circumstances over which he did not care to exercise control, he had sought out his old friend and boon companion, Bentley Morse, under the impression that he might be able to sponge upon him for a few days, or perhaps a couple of weeks, for Seton Hall had no lack of nerve. He thought Morse was better fixed than he appeared to be. However, he wouldn't back out now. Perhaps he could remain all day and over night with his old friend at any rate. Even the smallest favor was never turned down by Mr. Hall. He found it convenient sometimes to pocket his family pride and submit to the inevitable with the best grace he could muster.

## CHAPTER II.—In Which Seton Hall Shows He Is a Good Grafter.

Joe led his companion into the front yard and thence up to the door, which he opened and ushered Mr. Hall into a neat but shabby sitting-room, occupied by Mr. Morse, who sat by the window, a Sunday paper in his hands, and his slippered feet elevated against the wall at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Mr. Morse, here is a visitor to see you," said Joe.

"A visitor to see me!" ejaculated the head of the house in surprise. "Why, if it isn't my old friend Seton Hall."

He dropped his feet to the floor, got up hastily and advanced with outstretched hand toward his visitor. Joe didn't stop to hear any more, but went back to the kitchen where his patient little mother was preparing dinner for her unworthy spouse and her own bright son.

"Yes, it's me all right," said Hall, quite pleased with the warm reception he received. "How is the world using you, Bentley?"

Mr. Hall helped himself to a chair without waiting to be asked.

"Not very well," replied Morse sourly. "I've



been getting the short end of everything in the last few years."

"How is that?"

"Things don't seem to pan out. How are you making out yourself?"

"Rather under the weather at present, but that's between you and me. Understand?"

"Then we're in the same boat?"

"Not quite. I haven't a family to support like you have."

"It's a great expense these times," replied Morse, just as if he was working like a dray-horse to make ends meet.

"I should imagine so," answered Hall, stifling a grin under his hand, for Joe had, as we have seen, given him an idea of how the land lay. "Provisions and everything are very high."

"Very," nodded Morse, as though he were an authority on such matters.

"Rent is also high, I suppose?"

"Simply exorbitant. Landlords ought to be exterminated."

"In which case we'd all live rent free."

"Every man is entitled to a decent roof over his head," said Morse, mounting his favorite hobby.

"That's right," chuckled Seton Hall, taking his cue from his friend's words.

"Every man is entitled to a good living even if circumstances fail to provide him with suitable work."

"Correct," agreed Hall.

"No man ought to be expected to work at anything beneath his attainments."

"I agree with you."

"If I was running this country things would be different."

Seton Hall hadn't the least doubt about it.

"I wouldn't allow a few men to have all the money."

"And all the fat jobs," grinned Hall.

"Exactly. It's an outrage the way things are. Look at me."

Mr. Hall was looking at him.

"I am not getting a square deal. A few bloated non-producers are living on the fat of the land, like fat spiders, while I and others have to suffer. There ought to be a change."

"I wouldn't object to a change," said Mr. Hall.

"In fact I'd like to have a pocket full of it."

"I wonder how long the people are going to stand for this kind of thing?"

"They have the ballot box," suggested Hall.

"Bah! What's the ballot box? Who can you vote for? An honest and square man like you or me? Not at all. Men of our stamina do not get a chance to show what is in them. The people are so thick-headed that they pass us by and put up professional politicians, men who suck the available funds of our cities and country dry. Don't I see them riding in their autos every day? Is that what we pay them for? Who provides the autos? I am simply disgusted with the way things are going. The idea that a man of my ability should be compelled to go around without a decent pair of shoes when the people's money is being squandered like water."

"Yes, it's tough," coincided Seton Hall, sniffing the fragrance of the midday meal from afar and wondering if he would be invited to grace the family board.

It was a matter of some anxiety to him as he

had enjoyed but a meagre breakfast. At that moment Joe came to the sitting-room door and looked in. He was wondering how long Mr. Hall expected to remain, and whether his stepfather intended asking him to dinner.

"What do you want?" growled Mr. Morse, on seeing his stepson.

"Nothing," replied Joe, turning away.

"Hold on," cried the head of the house. "Tell your mother to put on another plate. You'll remain to dinner, won't you, old man?"

Hall could have cackled with joy, but he felt that he must not show undue haste in accepting the invitation.

"I should like to, Bentley," he said, scratching his chin in a reflective kind of way, "but——"

"But what?"

"I have an engage——" he began, fumbling for his watch, which he didn't produce, as it happened to be at a pawnbroker's. "Well, seeing it's you, and we've been so long parted, I'll let the engagement slide and eat with you."

"That's right. Make yourself at home."

Seton Hall had no objection to doing that.

"Joe," said Morse, "tell your mother we have a guest—an old friend of mine—for dinner. Tell her to do things up brown. Do you hear?"

Joe heard, but failed to reply as he vanished in the direction of the kitchen.

"I don't like that boy," continued Mr. Morse. "He's too independent for me. His mother has spoiled him completely."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Hall complacently, now assured of a square meal.

"He does not show the deference that a son should a father."

"You can hardly expect a stepson to——"

"But I do expect it," insisted Morse. "I am the head of this house. I have rights that should be respected. My wife is properly subservient, why shouldn't her son imitate her example?"

Seton Hall replied that he guessed Morse's point was well taken.

"The head of a family ought to be deferred to," went on Morse. "His comfort ought to be always the first consideration. By the way, Seton, are you married?"

"No, I am thankful to say. I find it difficult enough to support myself without the added burden of a wife and perhaps a family. The only independent men in this world are the single ones. Of course if a man has plenty of money then he can afford the luxury of a wife, otherwise he is foolish to tie himself up like a slave."

In a short time Joe returned and announced that dinner was on the table. Seton Hall rose with some alacrity, as if the chair had suddenly grown too hot for him, and accompanied Mr. Morse to the poorly furnished dining-room.

"Mrs. Morse," said her husband loftily, "allow me to introduce my friend, Seton Hall. Hall, this is my wife."

The little woman bowed. She was not particularly struck with the visitor, especially as Joe had not pictured him in glowing colors.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance, madam," said Hall in his smoothest way. "It is a great pleasure to meet an old friend surrounded by his estimable wife and——son."

The meal, which was a plain but substantial one, was enjoyed by Mr. Hall, who permitted his host to force a second helping of meat on him.



In fact he made an inroad into everything in sight, as he was not sure that any supper would be coming his way unless his friend Morse pressed him to remain. However, having located Morse, he expected to have no difficulty in enjoying his hospitality at intervals. He had a variety of schemes for raising money in view, and did not doubt but that he could induce Morse to join him in one or more of them. Morse seemed to be just the kind of man who could be persuaded to go into anything that promised to put him square in the world. Joe's stepfather was by nature something of a chump. He could be easily led by a specious adviser. Seton Hall was shrewd enough to see that, and he determined to profit by it. He had no real friendship for Morse. All the interest Hall took in him was to make use of him as occasion served. Although Hall had nothing in view just then he took Morse out for a walk after dinner, and then began to throw out hints about some profitable venture he had under consideration.

"Maybe I can let you in on it," he said confidentially.

"I wish you would," replied Morse eagerly. "I'm terribly short of funds."

"Well, I'll see what I can do. If it is possible to get you in depend on it I'll do it," slapping his friend familiarly on the back.

He worked the imaginary game up so well that Morse insisted that he should stay to supper, which Hall obligingly did. After which, seeing there was no chance for a bed, he reluctantly took his leave.

### CHAPTER III.—How Joe Nabs a Shoplifter and Makes a Reputation for Himself.

Joe Sturgess was at his post in the office of Henderson's big department store promptly at eight o'clock on Monday morning as usual. He had been working at the store for nearly a year and had never yet been reported late by the time-keeper at the employees' entrance. His duties were chiefly connected with the superintendent's office, but he was also at the beck and call of the cashier, chief stenographer and first bookkeeper. Occasionally Mr. Henderson called on him for some trifling service. His chief business so far had been to carry messages to the heads of the different departments in the store when it was not advisable to use the telephone, and to take messages to various wholesale houses in town.

He had acquitted himself so well as to attract the attention of the superintendent, whose name was Harker, and he had lately been intrusted with more important errands than usually fell to the office boy. His pay which had been \$4 a week was raised to \$6, and he was in addition personally commended by the superintendent for the prompt and efficient manner in which he carried out his orders. Monday was bargain day at Henderson's, and the fact was always impressed on the public by large and enticing advertisements in the Sunday morning papers. Some bargain sales of especial value lasted only an hour, or between certain specified hours; but the general run were in force all day.

As a matter of course the store was crowded with women attracted by the opportunity to make certain purchases at a reduced rate for that day

only. The same kind of goods were seldom if ever offered on succeeding Mondays. It was Mr. Henderson's policy to have something different on his bargain tables each Monday, so that those who missed the bargains and were anxious to secure the goods would have to pay the regular price or go without for weeks afterward. Some goods marked down, for instance, from \$1.50 to 98 cents, or from \$1 to 69 and 79 cents, were not such bargains as they appeared to be.

But that fact was up to the customer to discover. The salesladies had a method of working off slow-selling stuff offered on the bargain tables at an apparent reduction to sharp-eyed bargain hunters that often elicited the admiration of the floor-walkers. At any rate although hundreds of ladies secured undoubted bargains at Henderson's on Monday, the proprietor of the store did not as a rule lose any money. Most of the goods offered at bargain rates had been purchased by Henderson's astute buyers particularly for these sales at cut-rate wholesale prices. The public got the benefit of the reduction and Henderson made a profit as well.

Manufacturers in every line of business need ready cash so badly at times that they are forced to make sacrifices to raise it, and Henderson's buyers were always on the lookout for such opportunities—that was part of their business. Although Joe Sturgess was only the office boy, and was not expected to know anything outside his actual duties, he was always picking up some fresh bit of information about how things were run at the store. He was interested in the department store business, and as he expected to grow up with the establishment, it was his opinion that he couldn't learn too much about the house.

He was a great favorite with the girls, and when he occasionally asked them questions on matters connected with their especial line they always answered him to the best of their knowledge and never put him off with pert replies. Henderson employed quite a number of argus-eyed persons, mostly women, as detectives, and these people had their work cut out for them on Mondays especially, for the professional shoplifter, as well as the kleptomaniac, were always active on that day. Joe knew most of these detectives by sight because they often brought some person caught lifting goods to the superintendent's office. These unhappy people were usually respectable persons who had yielded to impulse or a solitary temptation.

They were rarely turned over to an officer, but after the goods had been taken from them, were dismissed with a warning. There was a special room for the reception of the regular female crook, caught in the act, where she was searched before being handed over to the police. Weird and wonderful were the means and methods adopted by the shoplifter for "doing" the store, and more often than not they got away with the goods undetected. On the Monday morning with which we open this chapter the store was crowded as usual. About half-past eleven the superintendent called Joe into his office and gave him a message to deliver to the head floor-walker of the main floor. He handed the message to the man and started to return to the elevator. As he approached the silk and velvet counter he saw a



handsomely dressed young lady examining some goods.

At that moment the saleslady walked about a yard away and turned her back on the customer to pick a bolt of silk off the shelf. Joe saw the handsome young woman give a quick, covert glance around and then snatch part of a bolt of silk from under the pile in front of her and dexterously slip it into a long, secret pocket on the inside of her coat. Only an expert shoplifter could have accomplished the job with such neatness and despatch. The boy was simply paralyzed at the audacious act. He could hardly believe that so aristocratic looking a lady would be guilty of such a deed. Still the evidence of his eyes was before him and his duty to the store was plain. He looked around, but not one of the store detectives was in sight. Neither was there a floor-walker within hail. He felt that he had a delicate matter on his hands, and he argued that the easiest way was the best. Had he known that he was up against one of the star shoplifters of the town he might have been less particular.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, walking up to the young lady, who stared slightly as he laid his hand on her arm. "The superintendent would like to see you in his office."

"See me!" exclaimed the shoplifter, whose suspicions were at once aroused.

"Yes, madam," replied Joe respectfully, who, in his inexperience, thought he might induce the young lady to accompany him to the office on the second floor.

Had she been merely an amateur thief, or if this was her first essay at lifting a piece of goods on the sly, he might have succeeded, but with the woman in question he was only wasting his words. She jumped to the conclusion that this boy was one of the store detectives, and had caught her in the act. She knew what was meant by a visit to the superintendent's office. Her only course was instant escape in the least conspicuous way possible. She was accompanied by an accomplice, a tall, powerfully built man, with a heavy black mustache, who was standing carelessly against a counter a dozen feet away, with his wary eye on the lookout in her interest. It was his place to interfere in case she was caught by any one of those connected with the store, make a rumpus, if need be, so that in the confusion she could get away and lose herself in the crowd.

"I have no business with the superintendent," she replied haughtily, making a sign of distress to her accomplice.

He understood the signal and advanced to find out what was the trouble. Her answer placed Joe in a quandary. Before he had decided what to do the lady's escort came up.

"What's the trouble?" he asked brusquely.

Joe looked up, and mistaking him for one of the store detectives, whom he greatly resembled, blurted out:

"I saw this lady take a small bolt of silk off the counter and——"

"How dare you accuse me of theft?" cried the young woman, flashing an indignant look at the boy.

"Because you have the goods under your coat, madam," replied Joe Sturgess coolly.

The lady's escort raised his cane to strike the boy. His purpose in doing so was to create the necessary excitement that would give his com-

panion the chance to slip away in the confusion. It happened, however, that the floor-walker of that section came upon the scene at that moment. Seeing trouble ahead he seized the man's uplifted arm and arrested the blow. At the same moment the shoplifter started to move hurriedly away. Joe was too quick for her, and grabbed her by the arm.

"How dare you!" she cried, striking at him.

Joe caught her other arm. The saleslady at the counter uttered an exclamation of surprise, while the cash girl above, who was a nervous little thing, uttered a shrill scream that alarmed the whole floor, and brought a detective and two other floor-walkers to the spot. The lady customers in that vicinity were greatly startled, and many of them crowded forward to ascertain what had happened. The shoplifter struggled desperately to escape from Joe, kicking him in the shins and trying to throw him. Finding that he was getting the worst of the matter, Joe, satisfied now that the woman must be a professional thief, dexterously tripped her up and she fell to the floor.

"What's the trouble here?" demanded the detective, pushing his way forward, as the shoplifter fell back on that last of feminine resorts, a succession of screams.

"I've caught a thief," replied Joe. "She took a bolt of silk off that counter and shoved it under her coat."

"I think I know you, madam," said the detective. "We've been trying to catch you for a long time."

He lifted the flap of her coat and saw the top of the silk bolt just peeping out of a deep pocket made expressly to hold such things.

"Ha!" I see we've got you with the goods at last," he said, in a tone of satisfaction. "Just get up, please, and come with me quietly, or I'll place the handcuffs on you. Stand back, ladies," to the crowd. "Stand back. Hold that man, Stebbins," to the floor-walker, "and bring him along, too. Give him a hand, Brown," to another floor-walker.

The accomplice would have got away only the crowd was so dense that he couldn't make his way through it, though he tried desperately to do so, thrusting screaming women customers aside. The two floor-walkers managed to hold him at last. Joe held on to one of the shoplifter's arms while the detective gripped the other. The young lady screamed and made a terrible scene, but she was up against it hard and knew it. She and her accomplice were hustled over to the elevator and thrust into the cage with little ceremony, for they were entitled to no respect. They were marched to the superintendent's room first and there Joe told his story, clearly and to the point. There was no going behind the evidence on the woman's person, so the superintendent ordered her to be taken to the private room and searched while he telephoned to the police. A whole lot of other stuff was found on the woman, though it did not all belong to Henderson's store, for she had been working other shops before coming there. She and the man were turned over to a couple of officers, and the detective who had come to Joe's relief went along to press the charge. The superintendent called Joe into his room.

"Young man," he said, "you have done the store a remarkably fine service in detecting that woman and preventing her escape. She is Nance Goodwin, the queen of the shoplifters. One of the



cutest women in the business. She has eluded detection for a long time, though the detectives of every department store in the city have been constantly on the lookout for her. Mr. Henderson is bound to reward you for what you've done. For myself I will say that you're an ornament to our establishment, and this service will be the making of you. I will also see that you are taken care of."

Then he dismissed Joe, whose brilliant achievement was already being circulated all over the store, and he was raised to the highest pinnacle of popular regard.

#### CHAPTER IV.—Joe Receives a Small Reward.

When Mr. Henderson appeared about noon and the superintendent told him about the capture of the notorious shoplifter by Joe Sturgess he was very much pleased. He sent for the boy, complimented him highly for his conduct in the matter, and handed him \$100 in bills. He also told the superintendent to raise Joe's wages another dollar a week. Of course the incident was printed in all the Boston afternoon papers, and Joe's name appeared for the first time in cold type. Long before the boy reached home his stepfather had read the story in the paper and had called his wife's attention to it.

"He ought to get some reward for that," said Mr. Morse eagerly.

He pictured to himself the handling of that reward, which, as the boy's guardian by marriage, he considered he had the right to do. Joe's mother saw through his motive, and she hoped her son, if he got a monetary reward, would put it in a savings bank in his own name. She had learned by experience that her second husband was not the right kind of man to take charge of other people's property. She made no answer to Mr. Morse's remark, and her husband retired to the sitting-room to read the story again and think the matter up. Supper was ready when Joe entered the house.

"I see you've got yourself in the newspaper," said Mr. Morse, soon after they sat down to the table.

"Well, what of it?" asked Joe. "Did you read the story, mother?" he said, turning to the only parent to whom he acknowledged allegiance.

"Your father read it to me," replied the little woman. "I should like you to tell me how the affair happened."

Joe hastened to give her the full particulars, to which Mr. Morse listened attentively. The boy wound up by stating that his wages had been raised another dollar, and that Mr. Henderson had given him \$100 in money.

"One hundred dollars, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Morse, pricking up his ears.

Mrs. Morse regretted that Joe had mentioned the matter at the table. That \$100 would be a great temptation to her worthless husband, and she doubted not that he would leave no stone unturned to get hold of it.

"You brought the money home, I presume?" went on Mr. Morse, licking his chops.

"Why do you ask?" asked Joe shortly.

"Because as your father you will no doubt wish

me to take charge of it for you," replied Mr. Morse. "I will be glad to accommodate you."

"Thank you," replied Joe dryly; "but I think I'm old enough to look after my own money."

"Ahem! I will not deny that you're a smart boy," replied his stepfather suavely; "but as your legal guardian——"

"You are not my guardian. My mother is the only one I acknowledge as such."

Mr. Morse bit his lips with some disappointment. Then a brilliant idea struck him. He knew he could bulldoze his wife very easily.

"Very well, Joe," he said in a resigned tone, "if you prefer your mother to keep your money I have nothing to say. She is your mother, of course, and it is natural you should think of her first. It would give me great pleasure to enjoy your confidence and do you a little service, but as long as you would rather trust your mother, why, it's all right. She will take as good care of the \$100 as I would."

"I think I will keep it and put it in a bank tomorrow," said Joe. "I don't believe mother cares for the responsibility."

The boy knew that his stepfather wouldn't give his wife a moment's peace if she had the money in her possession until she turned it over to him, and he did not intend that his mother should be harassed in the matter. Mr. Morse was disappointed again. Then another brilliant idea occurred to him. If Joe intended keeping the money till the next day Mr. Morse saw the chance of abstracting it from his clothes after he had gone to bed and was asleep. Once he got it in his hands he was indifferent as to how much the boy kicked about it. He could assert his authority as his stepfather and hold on to it. So instead of trying to influence Joe against banking the money he said nothing, and chuckled quietly to himself. Nothing further was said upon the subject, and after supper Mr. Morse borrowed ten cents from his wife and hiked himself to the corner saloon.

"I am sorry that you mentioned the money that Mr. Henderson gave you," said Mrs. Morse after her husband had left the house.

"What difference does it make, mother?" said Joe.

"I'm afraid your stepfather will try to get it away from you."

"If he does he's welcome to it," grinned the boy.

"Have you got it about you?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better let me have it. I'll hide it till you go to the store tomorrow morning. It will be safer with me as long as Mr. Morse does not suspect I have it."

"All right, mother, here it is," and Joe tossed her five \$20 bills.

When Mr. Morse returned from the saloon that evening after eleven o'clock Joe was fast asleep in his bed in the front attic. Mrs. Morse was also asleep, a fact that her husband was very careful to ascertain. Then he removed his shoes, took the lamp, which was turned down, from the small table, stole out onto the landing and softly mounted the stairs to the attic. The attic door was open and he shaded the lamp with his hand and listened. He heard Joe's regular breathing and was satisfied all was right. Entering the room he looked around for the boy's clothes and saw them on a chair. Putting the lamp on the



floor he took up Joe's trousers first and examined all the pockets. There was perhaps forty cents in change which he did not disturb. Then he turned his attention to Joe's vest, but without result. Finally he tackled the boy's jacket.

"What the dickens did he do with that \$100?" muttered Mr. Morse in a tone of disappointment, as he tossed the jacket back on the chair.

He scratched his head and looked around the poorly furnished room. He took up the pants and vest and went over them again, but with no better luck. After considering a moment he went over to the small cheap bureau, where Joe kept his few possessions, and examined it thoroughly. While he was thus engaged Joe suddenly woke up and discovered his stepfather in his room and engaged in a rather questionable occupation.

"What are you looking for, Mr. Morse?" he asked in a solemn tone.

His stepfather turned around in a startled way at the sound of his voice and slammed the drawer shut.

"I've got a toothache," fluttered Mr. Morse. "I was looking for your bottle of drops."

Joe knew that he wasn't telling the truth.

"You will find the drops on the shelf over the wash basin," replied the boy. "I don't keep bottles in my drawers."

Mr. Morse hastily walked over to the shelf, singled out the bottle of drops and left the attic. Joe chuckled as he looked after his retreating figure.

"He didn't come up here for toothache drops," he said to himself. "He was searching for that \$100. I noticed right away that my clothes were disarranged, and that showed that he had been through them. It's lucky that mother took the money to keep for me till morning. It is evident that she suspected Mr. Morse would be up to some such trick as I caught him at. I'll bet he feels greatly disappointed at the results of his hunt. He wouldn't have found that money up here if he'd looked for it all night. He'd like to have the pleasure of spending that \$100. It would be a regular windfall for him. But I guess he'll have to continue to get along on the small amounts he begs from mother. For a healthy, able-bodied man he's mighty small potatoes in my estimation."

Thus soliloquizing Joe lay down and went to sleep again.

#### CHAPTER V.—Describes How Seton Hall Turned the Screws on Homer Carroll.

Next morning Joe had to appear in court at the examination of Nance Godwin, the shoplifter, and her confederate. Both were held for trial—Nance on the charge of grand larceny and her associate, who gave his name as Howard Sands, as accessory. The man's bail was placed at \$1,000, and a lawyer came forward and qualified for that amount, which gave Sands his freedom until he had to appear for his trial. On his way back to the store Joe saw Seton Hall talking to the special messenger of Henderson's establishment, a young man by the name of Homer Carroll. Every morning Carroll carried the preceding day's receipts of the store to the Tradesmen's Bank. He also collected the regular running accounts from Henderson's influential customers at the end of

thirty, sixty or ninety days, as the case might be.

When one of these customers wanted to select from a new line of goods at her home, Carroll always carried an assortment of the stuff for her to examine, and his services was always included in the price charged. Sometimes he carried \$200 or \$300 worth of small merchandise in a suit case or two, and on some occasions even more than that when sterling silver or gold mounted articles were sent for. Only a man who enjoyed the complete confidence of Mr. Henderson could hold the job; and in addition he had to possess perfect manners, a persuasive tongue and other irreproachable qualifications.

In all these respects Homer Carroll filled the bill, and his outward person corresponded with his talents as an expert salesman. Carroll, however, had drawbacks of which his employer was ignorant. He was a high roller in a small way, and his salary didn't begin to satisfy his numerous wants. The result was he took to gambling to try to make up the deficiency. For a long time luck played into his hands, and he had plenty of money to cut a splurge with. Lately the fickle goddess Fortune had turned her back on him, and he found himself in a state of financial embarrassment. He not only owed various amounts to friends, which was not a great matter, but he owed a considerable sum to Howard Sands, the partner of Nance Goodwin, who was a professional gambler.

Seton Hall had once been hand in glove with Howard Sands, but when he got completely broke Sands shook him on account of his persistent efforts to live on the gambler. When Sands was arrested with the shoplifter he sent for Seton Hall, had a quiet talk with him about Homer Carroll, and sent him to hunt up the messenger with a request for immediate payment of his gambling claim. Hall was instructed to press the matter with threats of exposure in case Homer Carroll failed to show cause. The actual payment of his claim was not really what the gambler was aiming at. He had a deeper purpose in view. He believed, with good reason, that he had Carroll where the shoe pinches, and he meant to make capital out of the fact.

Seton Hall was willing to do most anything to raise the wind, and as the gambler knew his character like a book, he sized the man up as a valuable accomplice as occasion served. Hall had just met Homer Carroll on the corner of the street and introduced himself as an envoy from Howard Sands, when Joe Sturgess came along and saw them together. The boy immediately jumped to the conclusion that Seton Hall was on friendly terms with Carroll, and he was rather surprised, for he believed that Hall was not a desirable associate for such a smart and gentlemanly young fellow as the messenger of Henderson's department store. However, it was none of his business, so he passed on and soon forgot all about the circumstance. In the meantime Hall broached the object of the interview to Homer Carroll. He produced Carroll's I O U for \$600, made out in favor of Howard Sands, and suggested that immediate payment would be considered as a favor.

"I am sorry," answered Carroll, "but it isn't possible for me to pay just now. Besides, Mr. Sands told me I could take my time."



"That's all right," replied Hall glibly; "that was before Sands got into this difficulty at your store. Now he needs money the worst way, and is calling in all his loans and due bills. He instructed me to tell you that he must have the money within a day or two."

"But I can't pay within a day or two," replied Carroll irritably.

"Why not?" said Hall in a business-like tone.

"Because I can't," returned the messenger angrily.

"You get a good salary, don't you?"

"That's my business."

"When can you pay this I O U?"

"I don't know," replied Carroll shortly.

"Is that the answer I'm to take back to Sands?"

"You can take back any answer you please to him."

"Very well, Mr. Carroll. Don't blame Sands then if he sends this I O U by me to Mr. Henderson with the request that he use his influence with you to settle it."

Homer Carroll gave a gasp of consternation at those words. He hadn't expected any such development as that. If Howard Sands carried out that plan, and sent a full explanation with the I O U to Mr. Henderson, he (Carroll) would be up against it for fair. The department store proprietor was known to have very set notions about some things—drinking and gambling in particular.

He strongly objected to these failings in his employees, and several persons attached to the store had been discharged for indulging in one or the other of these vices. A gambling debt for so large an amount as \$600 would be regarded by Mr. Henderson as an extremely serious matter, and Carroll felt certain it would cause his instant dismissal from his position. No other responsible house would hire him without a reference from Henderson, and it would be out of the question to expect the merchant to give him one under the circumstances of the case. All these facts flashed through Carroll's brain in the twinkling of an eye after Seton Hall had uttered his veiled threat.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Hall, it won't do for Mr. Sands to do that," he palpitated in a funk. "Why, man, it would ruin me."

"Well you ought to know," returned Hall, carelessly. "If such a course is going to put you in a bad hole I should imagine that it would be to your interest to make an effort to satisfy Sands's claim."

"But it is utterly impossible for me to raise so large a sum as \$600 in a few days. I must have time."

"I have no doubt that Sands wouldn't press you if he wasn't in the deuce of a hole himself. He must have money to pay a lawyer to defend both Miss Goodwin and himself when their trial comes on. As money isn't to be picked up at haphazard he is compelled to call upon all his available resources, of which this I O U is one. He will give you two or three days to turn around in before proceeding to extremes, which he will regret to have to do in case you fail to come to time. You really mustn't blame Sands, my dear fellow. Self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"But I don't know where I could raise over \$100 to save my life," almost groaned Carroll.

"Well, now, that's strange," replied Hall in a purring tone.

"How is it strange?" asked Carroll, with some impatience.

"It seems to me if I was in your position I should have little difficulty in raising \$600 in a case of emergency."

"Don't talk nonsense. You're the confidential messenger for Henderson, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Very good. Among other duties I believe you told Sands that you carry the day's receipts of the store every morning to the bank?"

"Well, what if I do?"

"It is almost wholly in ready money, isn't it?"

"I believe it is."

"Don't you know that it is?"

"I do not."

"Why not?"

"Because the cashier puts the money, checks and bankbook in a small leathern bag which he locks and straps before handing to me."

"And then he hands you the key?"

"He does not. He keeps the key himself."

"And sends it to the bank by somebody else, I suppose," said Hall, with a slight sneer. "I thought you was a trusted employee."

"I am a trusted employee, but as the receipts of the store for one day even amount to many thousands of dollars, Mr. Henderson no doubt considers that some precaution is necessary."

"Oh, I see. But what is to prevent you and the person carrying the key coming together by prearrangement—I mean in case you two were that way inclined—and then——" Carroll laughed.

"One very important thing prevents such an arrangement as you mention."

"What is it?" asked Steon Hall, curiously.

"The cashier doesn't send the key by another messenger."

"How does he send it, then?"

"He doesn't send it at all."

"No? Then how does the receiving teller get at the contents of the bag when you present it at the bank?"

"Easily."

"Perhaps you don't mind telling me."

I haven't any objection. I should think your mind would already have grasped the solution to the problem. The bank has a duplicate key to the bag."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hall, feeling rather flat.

"By the way, Mr. Hall, I'd like to ask you a question."

"Ask it."

"What were you aiming at when you brought up the subject of the bag?"

"I was thinking that it afforded you an easy and convenient way of raising \$600 in an emergency like the one you're in."

"You mean by appropriating that amount from the funds of the store, eh? Thank you, I don't care to go to the State prison."

"Oh, there are more ways than one of killing a cat," chuckled Steon Hall.

"What do you mean by that?"

"What kind of looking bag does the cashier use in which to send the money by you to the bank?"

"A small leather one similar to that carried by bank messengers. I believe the bank furnished this bag originally."



"It seems to me it would be the the simplest thing in the world to find a duplicate of that bag you carry to the bank."

"A duplicate?"

"Exactly. One that looks so like it that you couldn't tell them apart. It would be filled with cabbage leaves, or anything in fact that would correspond with the weight of the bag you carry yourself. Now, after you started for the bank with your bag, I could come along with the other bag and meet you. We'd be so glad to see each other that we'd drop our bags and shake hands. While we were talking a friend of mine steps up, changes the two bags, and tells me that a man around the corner is anxious to see me. We each grab the exchanged bag and walk away just as if nothing had happened. You go to the bank with the one containing the cabbage leaves, while I take the bag with the funds to a safe place and cut it open. The money is counted and divided into four parts. You get one part and this I O U into the bargain. I and my friend each get a quarter, and the fourth quarter goes to Sands. How does the scheme strike you?"

"It doesn't strike me at all."

"Why not?"

"Because I'd be sure to get the short end of the deal."

"How would you?"

"When the duplicate bag was opened at the bank, and the teller found only cabbage leaves or some other rot in it, what would happen to me?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!"

"What could happen? You could swear that the cashier handed you the bag as usual and you carried it to the bank. That's all you know, and all you're expected to know. You couldn't have opened the bag enroute and changed the contents because you didn't have the key. You could swear that you never let go of the bag from the time the cashier handed it to you locked and strapped until you presented it to the receiving teller. You see there wouldn't be a bit of evidence against you."

"Henderson would put a smart detective on the case and he might find the necessary evidence."

"The best detective in the world couldn't find a thing against you."

"Well, I'd be fired for carelessness. That's the least that could happen to me," said Carroll.

"What need you care? Your share of the spoil would amount to a good sum, I should imagine, if the job was pulled off on Tuesday after the bargain day sales of the day before. You could afford to get discharged for that amount of ready money, couldn't you?"

"I might, if the job was thoroughly safe," replied Carroll, who was interested in the scheme in spite of any qualms of conscience.

"Well, if you're willing to stand in with me I'll put the thing through as slick as a greased whistle. It's an easy way for you to settle that I O U and secure a good haul of money besides." Homer Carroll, however, hemmed and hawed, and seemed skittish about embarking in the ticklish enterprise. Finally Seton Hall grew impatient.

"Do you know of any better way by which you can settle this I O U?" he asked. Carroll confessed that he did not.

"Well, it's got to be settled, if Sands has to

communicate with Mr. Henderson. I've suggested how you can get out of your hole with money to boot. It's up to you." Driven into a bad corner Carroll consented to stand in with Hall.

## CHAPTER VI.—What Joe Overheard At The Back Of The Woodshed.

On the following Sunday afternoon Seton Hall called again on Bentley Morse. He had a new suit on, with hat and shoes complete, and he looked like a dude compared with his appearance the week before. Joe was out in the back yard near the woodshed when Hall made his appearance and he marveled much at his improved looks.

"He must have struck luck somewhere," thought the boy. "He's too late for dinner today, but I dare say he'll stay to supper." Hall entered the house and Joe saw nothing more of him for half an hour. Joe was sitting against the back of the woodshed reading an interesting book when he heard voices. The voices belonged to Hall and Mr. Morse, who had entered the woodshed. There was a knothole close to Joe's head and he heard Hall say:

"I suppose there is no danger of anybody overhearing us here, Morse?"

"Not the least," replied Mr. Morse. "Nobody comes here on Sunday except Joe to get an armful of wood for the kitchen in the morning."

"Where is your stepson now?"

"I couldn't tell you. He generally goes down to the river on Sunday afternoon, so I s'pose he's there now."

"Well, as long as he's not around here it's all right."

"What have you got to tell me that you're so particular about?"

"You remember I told you last Sunday that I had something in the money-making line in view?" said Hall.

"Yes, and you said you'd try and let me in on it if you could manage to do so."

"That's right. Well, since then the matter has rounded out and I find that I can offer you the chance to make \$500 for a few hours work."

"Five hundred dollars for a few hours work!" ejaculated Mr. Morse, hardly believing his ears. Joe was almost as much interested in such a remarkable proposition as was his stepfather, and he stuck his ear close to the knothole in order to learn if possible the details of what seemed to be a regular snap.

"Precisely—\$500," replied Seton Hall.

"What will I have to do to earn that amount?" asked Mr. Morse.

"Nothing of any great importance."

"Will I really get \$500?" asked Joe's stepfather eagerly.

"Undoubtedly."

"Tell me about it then. That sum of money would be a god-send to me. It would raise me a thousand per cent in the estimation of Mrs. Morse. I have a hard job raising a quarter a day from her to spend on myself, and a quarter doesn't go very far."

"Not very far," chuckled Hall. "Five hundred dollars would put you on your feet."

"I should say it would. I need new clothes, and shoes, and a hat; in fact a whole lot of



things which I can't get at present. I should like to walk into the house some day looking like a gentleman, with a wad in my pocket, and surprise Mrs. Morse, and that young cub of hers," said Mr. Morse unctuously.

"Meaning your stepson?"

"Of course—who else?"

"Well, Bentley, am I to take it for granted that you're not over particular concerning the character of the job in view if there is money in it?" asked Seton Hall insinuatingly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that this job is a little out of the regular run—something of a special and confidential nature—otherwise common sense would tell you that nobody would pay so large a sum for so little actual work."

"Do you mean to say it's crooked? If it is, I don't know that I could afford to go into it. It would ruin me if I was sent to prison."

"I'll admit that it isn't as straight as a die, but it's perfectly safe, or I shouldn't go into it myself. There isn't the slightest danger of either of us going to prison for it."

"Let me hear what it is," said Mr. Morse, to whom the promised \$500 was a great temptation. He was not really overburdened with conscientious scruples, but he had a great respect for the law. He would not hesitate to engage in some things that were not strictly regular provided he had a reasonable assurance of immunity from the consequences connected therewith.

"I will tell you if you will promise me that I can depend on you," said Hall.

"I promise."

"All right. A friend of mine, named Howard Sands, is engineering this enterprise," proceeded Hall. Joe listening at the knothole, started on hearing Hall say that Howard Sands, the confederate of the notorious shoplifter, Nance Goodwin, was a friend of his. Sands had been shown up in the magistrate's court as a gambler and suspected crook, and it did not speak well for Seton Hall to be on friendly terms with such a person. The little that Joe had so far overheard impressed him with the idea that Hall was trying to inveigle Mr. Morse into some disreputable enterprise, and the boy felt that it was his duty to learn as much as he could about it so as to save his step father from getting himself into serious trouble.

"Sands, owing to the position in which he happens to be placed, is unable to take an active part in the job, which requires the services of two persons, and therefore he left it to me to select an assistant to help me out," went on Hall. Mr. Morse nodded and waited for further particulars.

"There's a good haul in the monetary line to be made on Tuesday morning," said Hall, watching Mr. Morse narrowly to see how he would take the suggestion.

"A good haul," answered Joe's stepfather slowly and doubtedly. "Do you mean to say that you want me to help you steal——"

"That's a very vulgar word, Mr. Morse," interrupted Hall glibly. "Just listen to me and I think you'll agree that the affair is rather different from a common theft."

"Go on," said Mr. Morse, not feeling quite easy in his mind about Hall's proposition.

"The matter is just this: Every business morn-

ing a young man, named Homer Carroll, carries the previous day's receipts of Henderson's department store to the Tradesmen's Bank. Are you following me?" said Hall.

"Yes," answered Mr. Morse.

"Good gracious!" breathed Joe at the knothole. "Is this a scheme to hold up Carroll and rob him on the street?"

"He carries the money in a leather bag, locked and strapped," went on Hall. "Now, Howard Sands has a strong hold on Carroll, so strong, in fact, that Carroll has consented to be a party to our little game. That fact makes the enterprise absolutely safe and sure. I have secured a leather bag that is a perfect facsimile of the one carried by Carroll. I have filled it with a few cheap books and newspapers so that its weight corresponds with Carroll's bag when it contains its valuable load of money and other items. On Tuesday morning I am to meet Carroll in front of the doorway of the Anchor Building, now undergoing repairs, on Elm Street a little below Washington. I wish you to be at the Anchor Building a few minutes before Carroll makes his appearance. I will have my bag and Henderson's messenger will have his. According to prearrangement both of us will drop our bags and shake hands. That will be your cue. You step forward, change the position of the two bags, then tap me on the arm and say that a man by the name of Johnson wishes to see me around the corner in Dock Square. That's all you have to do to earn the \$500. I will attend to the rest. What do you say? Are you in on it?"

"Suppose somebody sees me change the bags?" said Mr. Morse apprehensively.

"You must do it in an off-hand way, as if it was a joke, and then walk around to the square, where I'll meet you. We'll go around to Sands's room, and after he has examined the bag to see that you've made no mistake he'll hand you the \$500 and then you are through, and may go where you choose. Am I not offering you a regular snap? Why, man, if you were not an old chum of mine, and I know that you need money badly, I wouldn't think of making you this offer. Talk about easy money, Bentley, why it's just like finding it."

"You are sure that the messenger is in with you?" said Mr. Morse anxiously. "He is sure to notice me change the bags."

"He's in all right. We're going to whack up with him."

"But he'll be arrested when he reaches the bank with the wrong bag, won't he? Then he would give us away to try and save himself."

"He'll not be arrested, don't you fear. He does not carry the key of the bag, so that it is utterly impossible for him to open it and monkey with the contents. That will remove suspicion from him."

"But the people at the bank will be sure to know that the bag was changed on the way from the store."

"How can they tell that? The bags are exactly alike. Carroll and I have attended to that during the week. In fact Carroll has been carrying the new bag since Thursday as a test. Neither Henderson's cashier nor the receiving teller at the bank has noticed any difference. He will carry the new bag with the money in it on



Tuesday morning, and after you have made the exchange he will actually deliver the original bag at the bank. Carroll will be prepared to swear that the bag never left his hand en route. That will throw the matter up to the cashier of Henderson's. He will be equally liable to suspicion. What is to prevent the impression from gaining ground that he is the guilty man himself? Carroll will leave a part of the newspapers I have put in the bag in the cashier's waste paper basket on Tuesday morning, and when Henderson calls in a detective to investigate the matter the messenger will manage to convey a hint to him so that he will look into the basket, where he will find the tell-tale evidence. Then it will be up to the cashier to explain how the paper got there. You see everything has been thought of and arranged so as to throw suspicion in the wrong quarter and away from Carroll. As for you and I we won't figure in the affair at all. How can we? Nobody but Carroll and Sands will know that we've had anything to do with it."

Seton Hall's specious reasoning had so great an effect on Mr. Morse that he consented to take part in the enterprise, much to his friends satisfaction. A number of unimportant particulars were gone over by Hall, and the scheme finally arranged in all its details. Mr. Morse promised faithfully to meet Seton Hall at a certain hour in Dock Square on Tuesday morning, and then the two men left the woodshed and walked off up the street, leaving Joe Sturgess alone to digest the particulars of the well-laid project which he had overheard.

"Well, if that thing doesn't beat the Dutch for down-right rascality, I'm no judge of a piece of crooked work," mused the boy. "Of course it's up to me to prevent the job going through, and I shall do it; but how will I set to work? I'm afraid that it won't do to tell Mr. Morse that I'm on to the scheme, for he'd be sure to inform Hall, and Hall would put Carroll wise in turn. Carroll has a whole lot of influence with Mr. Henderson, and he'd use it to get me discharged out of revenge, and if that particular scheme was abandoned I couldn't show him up as a faithless employee, for there would be no evidence against him. I'll have to tell my story to Mr. Henderson himself, and let him act as he thinks best, requesting him, as a special favor, not to push matters against my stepfather."

Having decided on his course of action Joe left the rear of the shed and walked into the house.

## CHAPTER VII.—In Which Joe Discloses The Plot To The Head Of The House.

On Monday morning Joe was in the counting-room when the cashier handed Homer Carroll the leather bag to take to the bank as usual. He wondered if that was to be the last real trip he would ever make in the employ of Mr. Henderson.

Joe intended to have his interview with the proprietor just as soon as the gentleman made his appearance, which he usually did about eleven o'clock. It happened that Joe was out on an errand when Mr. Henderson arrived at the store, and as the proprietor was very busy thereafter, while Joe was very busy, too, the boy had no

opportunity to talk to the boss until he was preparing to go home. Then Joe seized the chance to enter his private office.

"What is it, Sturgess?" asked Mr. Henderson in a friendly tone, for since Joe's capture of the queen of the shoplifters the boy stood high in the estimation of the proprietor, as, in fact, he did with the superintendent and other leading employees.

"I wish to see you on a matter of importance," replied Joe respectfully.

"Indeed," answered Mr. Henderson in some surprise. "What is it?" Joe felt a trifle embarrassed about the revelation he was about to make, particularly as his stepfather was implicated in the matter.

"I've got something to tell you that is sure to surprise you." Mr. Henderson looked more astonished than ever.

"In fact, sir, I am afraid you may doubt my word, but I assure you that it is true, every word of it," went on the boy earnestly. Mr. Henderson read truthfulness and conviction in the boy's face, as well as in the tone of his voice.

"Proceed, my boy," he said kindly. "I have perfect confidence in your veracity."

"Every morning, except Sundays and legal holidays, you send a large sum of money to the Trademen's Bank for deposit by Homer Carroll, began Joe. As this was strictly an office secret the proprietor of the store was both astonished and disturbed to find that his office boy was aware of the nature of Carroll's morning errand.

"How came you to learn that fact, Sturgess?" he asked a bit sharply.

"I overheard two men yesterday afternoon talking about it."

"Two men! Are they connected with the store?"

"No, sir."

"They were strangers to you, then?"

"Hardly, sir. One of them is a man named Seton Hall, once a clerk in the Boylston Bank; the other is—my stepfather."

"Indeed. What was the nature of their conversation?"

"Seton Hall called at our house yesterday afternoon and persuaded my stepfather to assist him in a scheme to get possession of that bag. He assured my stepfather that Homer Carroll was a party to the plot, and that the project was bound to succeed without the least trouble or danger to anyone concerned." To say that Mr. Henderson was amazed at this revelation on the part of his office boy would be stating the thing mildly. As a matter of fact he was positively thunderstruck. He looked at Joe for some minutes without speaking. Then he took off his hat, laid it on top of his closed desk and seated himself in his pivot chair.

"Sit down, Sturgess," he said, pointing to the chair beside his desk. "Now, tell me, as near as you can remember, what you overheard and how you came to be in a position to do so." Joe began at the beginning by saying that he was sitting at the back of the woodshed in his yard reading, when Seton Hall and Mr. Morse, his stepfather, entered the shed.

He described how Hall had gradually led up to the subject in hand, and then he repeated the words of Hall, as well as he could recall them. Mr. Henderson gave him the closest attention.



and did not interrupt him once. He saw, as far as any man could see, that his office boy was telling the truth. After Joe had finished his story the proprietor questioned him closely on several points, chiefly those referring to Homer Carroll, but the boy's replies only confirmed the facts as he had stated them.

This is a very serious matter, Sturgess. Kindly ask Mr. Harker to step in here," said Mr. Henderson. Joe obeyed orders and returned with the superintendent. The proprietor briefly explained to his astonished manager the plot to get away with that day's receipts on its way to the bank on the following morning, and asked Joe to repeat his story, which the boy did without the slightest variation from his original statement.

"I see no reason to doubt the truth of Sturgess's story," said Mr. Henderson. "We must take means to catch the guilty ones in the act. If Homer Carroll is really a party to this piece of rascality the fact can be easily proved by having him followed and a sharp watch kept on his actions. The scheme is certainly a clever one, and had it not been overheard and reported to us by this boy the chances were all in favor of it going through successfully. Whether a sharp sleuth would afterward be successful in running the schemers down is another matter altogether. I shall leave this affair in your hands, Mr. Harker. Use your own judgment, but do not take any chances with the money."

"Very well, sir. I will make it my business to get at the bottom of the plot. By the way, Joe," turning to the boy. "I think you said that the substitute bag is now being used by the cashier unknowingly for the original."

"That is what Seton Hall told my stepfather," answered Joe.

"In which case the original bag is in possession of the rascals. I will have Mr. Brown, the cashier, bring the bag in here now, examine it thoroughly in our presence to see if he can detect whether it is the original or a substitute."

"Do so," said Mr. Henderson. The superintendent went into the counting-room and in a few minutes returned with the cashier and the leather bag.

"Mr. Brown," said Harker, "will you please examine that bag with great care and tell us whether that is the same bag that you have always been using to send our money to the bank." The cashier looked surprised, but proceeded to obey instructions.

"It must be the same bag unless the bank has returned us a duplicate," he said as he began looking it over. Finally he announced that it was not the original bag.

"How do you know it is not?" asked the superintendent.

"By a mark, a small star, that was on the bottom of the original. It does not appear on this bag."

"Perhaps it might have been rubbed out."

"I do not believe that it could be removed without some evidence remaining of that fact."

"Then in your opinion this is not the same bag that we originally got from the bank?"

"It is not the same bag."

"And the two bags are so much alike that you never noticed before that a change had been made in them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. That is all. Please do not mention this matter to any one, Mr. Brown. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may go," said the superintendent. "Well, Mr. Henderson," he added as soon as the door had closed on the cashier, "Mr. Brown seems to have confirmed one item at least of Sturgess's story."

"It would appear so," nodded the proprietor.

"The next thing in order will be to communicate with the bank. With your permission I will use your desk telephone." The desk was opened and the superintendent called up the girl at the store switchboard and asked her to call up the Tradesmen's Bank and connect the private office with the wire. In a few minutes the superintendent was in communication with the bank. He asked the cashier if the bag originally sent to the store to carry its funds in has ever been changed at the bank.

"Hold the wire and I will try and find out," he replied that the bag had never been replied the bank cashier. In less than five minutes changed by the bank.

"Are you positive of that fact?" asked Harker.

"I have the assurance of the receiving teller, and he is the only man who handles your bag."

"Thank you, that is all," replied the superintendent, ringing off. "Well, Mr. Henderson, we now have an added confirmation of this boy's story. I think we need no longer doubt that the plot is a real one, and that Homer Carroll is implicated in it. The bag could not very well have been changed without his knowledge and connivance."

"I agree with you. It is certainly a tremendous surprise to me to find that a young man of excellent family, who seems to have heretofore given us every reason to believe him above suspicion, should at last yield to temptation that can only end in disgrace, if not ultimate ruin. It grieves me, Mr. Harker, more than I can say. I have always regarded him as the brightest and smartest employee in my service. Really it shakes one's confidence in human nature. A man running any large business like this store is compelled to rely to a considerable extent on the faithfulness of his people. It is a sad thing when even one of them abuses the trust reposed in his honor."

"It is, indeed, sir," replied the superintendent; "but the newspapers are continually reporting instances of men who have gone wrong foolishly killed all their chances in life. I'm afraid that as long as the world wags these unfortunate things will happen. There must be a fatality attaching to some people, for it is a true saying that 'he whom the gods would destroy they first make mad,' and surely a young man with such talents and prospects as Homer Carroll has must be made to sacrifice them on the altar of money-lust."

"Well, make your arrangements, Mr. Harker, for catching these conspirators in such a way that there can be no question of their guilt," said Mr. Henderson, rising and putting on his hat. "As for you, Sturgess, I thank you for the interest you show in the welfare of this establishment, and I assure you that your future will be well taken care of. I have never failed to recognize faithfulness and merit in my employees."



"Thank you, sir. I did what I considered to be my duty. Now I hope you will for my mother's sake at least be lenient with Mr. Morse. If he is arrested and prosecuted for this matter, it will bring trouble on her and disgrace on us both. I have done my duty to you, sir, without reserve. Please think of my mother." There were tears in Joe's eyes and an earnest appeal in his voice that went straight to the hearts of both Mr. Henderson and his superintendent.

"My boy," said the proprietor, "I promise you that he shall not be prosecuted. See to it, Mr. Harker, that he is not arrested with the other two. If they implicate him in court try and square the matter with the detectives. You understand what I mean."

"Yes, sir," replied the superintendent.

"If absolutely necessary arrange to have Mr. Morse sent out of town till the matter blows over. Spare no expense to save him from the consequences of his foolishness. We must do this at all costs in justice to Sturgess and for his mother."

"Thank you, Mr. Henderson," said Joe gratefully.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—How Messrs. Sands And Hall Are Brought Up With A Round Turn

Long before the cashier called Homer Carroll to his desk to take the bag as usual to the bank Mr. Harker, the superintendent, had made his arrangements for protecting the money in transit and for the arrest of the two principals in the conspiracy. He had two lynx-eyed men in his office for an hour who were given a chance to size up Carroll. The duty of one was to proceed to the Anchor Building and lie in wait for the meeting between Carroll and Hall to take place as arranged; the business of the other was to shadow the messenger to the rendezvous and assist his brother detectives in making the arrest.

They were instructed to pay no attention to the man who changed the bags, but to make a note of his face and person for future use if necessary. The superintendent himself intended to be at the scene of the rascality so as to be able to swear against the guilty ones. At length Carroll was handed the bag containing the previous day's receipts and he started for the bank.

One of the sleuths was already on the ground, and the other followed Carroll. Mr. Harker also started for the Anchor Building. As Carroll had no reason to suspect that his duplicity was known and the scheme on the eve of a collapse, he walked down to the Anchor Building. Coming toward him he saw Seton Hall, bag in hand.

"How d'ye do, old man?" said Hall, dropping his bag and putting out his hand according to the prearranged programme. Carroll dropped his bag and shook hands with Hall, and both turning half way from the bags began to talk. Mr. Morse at this point issued from the door of the Anchor Building, and after a cautious glance around approached them. He seized the two bags and changed them in a rather clumsy way, and then tapped Hall on the shoulder.

"Say, Mr. Hall, a party by the name of Johnson wants to see you down in Dock Square," he said.

"That so, Bentley? Well, you go down there

and tell him I'll be there right away," replied Hall. Thereupon Joe's stepfather ambled off down Elm Street, glad that he had satisfactorily earned that \$500 that he fondly expected to handle soon. A moment later Hall and Carroll shook hands again, each grabbed his changed bag and started in different directions. One of the detectives followed Hall down Elm Street, with Superintendent Harker close behind, while the other shadowed Carroll to the bank.

The original arrangements included the arrest of the two men in front of the Anchor Building. This was changed at the request of the chief detective, who wished to capture Howard Sands, who, from Joe's story, appeared to be the originator of the crooked game. Mr. Morse was waiting for Hall in Dock Square. When the men came together they started over toward Faneuil Hall Square, thence through to North Market, past the Quincy Market and around the corner into Commercial Street, which they followed to Atlantic Ave., and entered the South Ferry Building. Here they took a boat for East Boston, landing near the foot of Lewis Street, which they followed into Summer, and along the latter thoroughfare into Liverpool Street, where they entered a three-story building.

The detective and Superintendent Harker kept right behind them all this time, the former following them upstairs to the top floor, where he saw them enter a room. A minute later the officer was joined by the superintendent. Removing his shoes he asked Harker, who was something of an athlete, to boost him up to the fanlight. The officer, much to his satisfaction, found that the fanlight was not secured on the inside and he cautiously opened it about an inch.

Hall and Mr. Morse were standing beside a small table at which Howard Sands was seated in the act of opening the leather bag with a key that fitted the lock. A bank-book, stuffed with checks, was taken out of the bag, and then one bundle of money labeled \$500.

"Here's the reward for your services, Mr. Morse," said Sands, tossing the bundle to him. "You never earned money easier in your life, eh?"

"That's right," replied Joe's stepfather. "If you have any more jobs like this one I'm on if you can use me."

"Then your conscience doesn't worry you a particle, does it?" laughed Sands.

"Not a bit. I believe that people who have a lot of money ought to be made to divide it with those who are hard up," replied Morse.

"Then everybody would be happy and things wouldn't be like they are now—a few having all the coin and living on the fat of the land, while the majority are hustling around to get half enough to eat. It's an outrage, and any scheme tending to make the rich shell out meets with my approval every time. Thanks for the \$500. It will come in mighty handy for me. I'll be able to live like a gentleman for a while. Good-day, gentlemen. You always know where to find me, Hall, in case you should need my valuable services again." While he was speaking the detective descended from his perch, and after telling Harker to hide in the corridor he slipped down to the landing below where he lay in wait for Mr. Morse.

"In a few minutes Mr. Morse, feeling like a



fighting cock, and mentally congratulating himself on the possession of \$500, which was fortune to him, descended the stairs. As he turned toward the lower flight the detective confronted him.

"Mr. Bentley Morse, I believe," said the officer, grimly. Joe's stepfather stopped, utterly confounded by being addressed by his own name by a stranger way over in East Boston. Then he regarded the detective with not a little anxiety.

"Your name is Morse, I think?" repeated the officer, this time sharply.

"Y-e-s," fluttered the owner of that name nervously.

"You have just received a bundle of bills, amounting to \$500 in return for services rendered. Hand it over, please."

"Do you mean rob me?" gasped Mr. Morse, in a tone of consternation.

"Not at all, Mr. Morse. I simply wish to take charge of it in interest of Mr. William Henderson, whose property it is."

"Oh, lor'!" gurgled Mr. Morse, who was a coward at heart, and immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had been pinched by the police. "Are you a—a——"

"Detective?" chuckled the officer, much amused at the man's evident fright. "Yes, you've hit it at the first guess," and he threw open the flap of his coat, displaying his badge.

"I'm done for," gasped Morse, grasping the railing for support. "I knew something would happen. Don't handcuff me, Mr. Officer. I'll go quietly."

"The money, please!" replied the detective curtly.

"Here it is. I haven't touched it. I never thought I'd have to go to jail. I wish I'd never listened to my friend Hall. He has ruined me. The officer glanced at the package of money and put it into his pocket.

"Now, Mr. Morse, you can go," he said.

"Go! I thought——"

"Go home and keep quiet, do you understand? You've been caught with the goods, but my instructions are not to arrest you. Now go and thank your stars that you've got off so easily. If you got what's coming to you as accessory in this case you'd go up for five years at least. Now, then, just make yourself scarce." The detective pushed the dazed man toward the lower stairs and returned to the landing above. Once more he mounted on the superintendent's shoulders and glanced into the room. The contents of the leather bag had been dumped on the table and Howard Sands was counting the packages of bills and loose money, while Seton Hall was keeping tab on the amount.

"There, now, how much does it foot up?" asked Sands, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Twenty-eight thousand, three hundred and sixty-two dollars and forty cents, answered Hall, complacently. "It's a fine haul. How much do I get? Remember I've done the real work and taken all the risk."

"I think we agreed on \$5,000," replied Sands, suavely.

"Couldn't you raise it three more, Sands? I think I'm entitled to that much."

"A bargain is a bargain, Hall," returned the gambler. "There's your money," and he pushed a pile of bills toward his companion. "Tell young

Carroll to meet me in the Pilgrim Rock Cafe at eight o'clock tonight and I will pay him his share."

"All right," replied Hall, looking longingly at the pile of money which still remained on the table. "You're making a good thing out of this job, Sands, and you haven't taken any chances at all."

"It's part of wisdom to be on the safe side," chuckled Sands. "You see, I need the coin badly. Nance is held on \$5,000 bail, and I promised to get her out. I'll never see that five thousand again."

"Why won't you? You'll get it back when she appears for trial."

"She won't appear, for she's sure to be convicted. They've got her dead this time. As soon as she's out on bail she'll skip for parts unknown."

"And so will you, I suppose?"

"Of course. Where Nance goes I go. The city will make \$6,000 out of us, while the State will be saved the cost of keeping Nance for a number of years, and maybe myself, too."

"Well, I guess I'll go. This \$5,000 will keep me in clover for awhile. I hope to see you again before you cuit the town for good."

"You'll find me at the Pilgrim Rock for the rest of the week, at any rate," said Sands, rising from his chair. "I'll let you out." The detective dropped to the floor and whispered something hurriedly into the superintendent's ear. Both drew revolvers and stood at the door. As the key was heard to turn in the lock the detective and Harker pushed the door in and rushed into the room, upsetting both Hall and Sands.

"You're pinched, both of you!" cried the officer in a loud voice. "Throw up your hands!"

The rascals were dumfounded. The detective quickly handcuffed them and after taking charge of the money, took them to the central office where they were jailed. Carroll had already been arrested. His father came to his rescue when the trial was held but it was of little avail as Homer, his son received six years in State's prison. Sands got ten years; Nance, for her part in the shoplifting affair received five years and Hall six years.

Mr. Morse immediately after being let go by the detective raced home, packed his clothes, took a train and went to another town where he went to work as a section hand on a railroad line. Joe did not tell his mother why he had left so suddenly though she could not understand his sudden leave.

Mr. Henderson called Joe in his office next day and made him a present of \$1,000; also a raise of \$10 a week, and promoted him to carrying the money to the bank after giving him a revolver to protect himself and instructions to use a taxi when his car was not convenient.

## CHAPTER IX.—In Which Joe Proves Himself a Hero.

Several months passed during which Joe Sturgess was advanced from office boy to general office assistant. One day a very charming little girl of perhaps fifteen came into the office and asked for Mr. Henderson. Joe had seen her once before and knew she was the big merchant's niece, whom



he had adopted on the sudden death of both her parents some years before. As Mr. Henderson had no children it was generally believed that his niece, whose name was Elsie Grant, would become his heiress. Joe was just coming out of the superintendent's office when the girl entered the outer room, and it was to him she put her query.

"No, Miss Grant," he answered, "Mr. Henderson went to a business meeting of a manufacturing establishment and I could not tell you when he'll return."

"It's too bad," she pouted, "I wanted to see him before he gets home."

Joe bowed politely, but could not suggest anything to relieve her evident impatience.

"Are you Joseph Sturgess?" she said suddenly, looking at the boy curiously.

"Yes, miss; that's my name."

"You're a smart boy, aren't you?"

Joe blushed and looked embarrassed.

"Uncle William says you're the smartest and brightest boy he ever had."

"I'm much obliged to him for saying so," returned Joe, not feeling quite at ease.

"You're the boy who caught that woman shoplifter, aren't you?"

Joe confessed that he was the identical boy.

"That isn't the only thing you've done. You saved uncle many thousand dollars when his messenger conspired with some other men to steal the bag that he carried to the bank every day. You found out all about the plot beforehand and told my uncle in time to defeat the plan and have the men caught. They've just been sent to prison."

"It just happened to be my luck to overhear two of the persons talking the matter over, and of course I considered it my duty to inform Mr. Henderson."

"You're carrying the bag to the bank yourself now, I believe?"

"Yes, miss."

"Uncle intends to promote you as fast as you are capable of doing better work."

"Well, I try to do the best I can all the time."

"I'm sure you do, for uncle says so. Wouldn't you like to call at our house and see me some evening? I should be glad to have you come."

"I'm much obliged to you for inviting me, Miss Grant, but I'm afraid Mr. Henderson won't care for me to do so."

"Why not?" she exclaimed, opening her pretty eyes.

"Well, it wouldn't be just the thing, I'm afraid, for an employee of the store to pay a visit at the boss's home. He'd think I had a big nerve."

"Why should he when I have invited you?"

"He might think that you ought not to have invited me."

"He never objects to anybody that I invite, and I am sure he wouldn't object to you, anyway."

"You seem to have a very good opinion of me," he said laughingly.

"I have," she answered with emphasis. "Now promise me you will call."

"If you insist I will."

"I don't insist. I have no right to do that. But it would give me a great deal of pleasure if you would call."

"Then I will do so."

"When?"

"Whenever you say."

"Next Wednesday evening then. Will that be convenient for you?"

"Any evening will be convenient for me that suits you."

"It's very nice of you to say that. Well, I will look for you next Wednesday evening. Have you our address?"

"I haven't the number, but I know Mr. Henderson lives somewhere on Commonwealth Avenue."

Miss Grant mentioned the number and Joe made a note of it.

"I think I will make a purchase or two on the next floor and then go home, as I am afraid I can't wait any longer for uncle. Good-by."

"Good-by, Miss Grant," said Joe, taking the dainty hand she extended to him.

Then she walked out of the office.

"You seem to be pretty thick with Mr. Henderson's niece," said the cashier with a provoking smile, as Joe was passing his desk.

"I was just talking with her for a few minutes, sir."

"It seemed to be a very interesting conversation."

"She was speaking about the shoplifter I caught, and also about the leather bag affair."

"She's a very nice young lady, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Henderson thinks there isn't another girl like her in the world."

"You don't blame him for thinking that, do you?"

"Certainly not. I guess there isn't any doubt but she'll come in for all he's worth when he dies. In that case she's bound to be a wealthy heiress. She'll make a fine catch for some of our young aristocrats."

Joe thought the young man who got her for his wife would be uncommonly lucky.

"By the way, Joe, you might as well take this check over to the New England Bank and see if it's all right. I have my doubts about it. It may save time if I can get a line on it right off," said the cashier.

"All right, sir. It won't take me but a few minutes, for the bank is only three blocks away."

Joe took the check, got his hat and left the office. He didn't get out of the building as soon as he thought he would. One of the floor-walkers held him to tell him a funny gag. Then two of the pretty salesladies with whom he was a great favorite beckoned him to their counter for just a minute to tell him a great secret. It took them three minutes to tell it, and he couldn't get away. Then another salesgirl wanted him to take a note to a friend of hers at the stationery counter. It was very important, she said, and she had been wondering how she could get it to her friend till she spied Joe, and of course she knew he'd oblige her just this once.

Naturally he couldn't resist her appeal. Altogether he was ten minutes getting to the sidewalk from the office. As events proved it was a fortunate thing that he was delayed. Starting to cross the street he saw Elsie Grant just ahead of him. An electric car was coming up the street while two cabs were coming down. Concealed by them an automobile was following. The girl stepped into an open space to avoid the cabs just as the auto swung around into view at a quick pace. Elsie saw that she was caught in a trap



and she uttered a scream of terror. Joe was close behind her and saw her perilous predicament, too. He jumped forward, caught her in his arms, and was struck and flung a dozen feet by the machine. He landed in an unconscious heap in the street with the girl in his arms right before one of the cabs which the driver barely halted in time to avoid running them down.

#### CHAPTER X.—Wherein Joe Is Obligated to Go to a Hospital.

Of course great excitement followed the accident, which was seen by dozens of people, including Mr. Henderson, who had just come to the store. The auto was stopped and the chauffeur, followed by the owner, a big capitalist, jumped out and hastened to pick up the unconscious boy and his lovely burden whose life he had undoubtedly saved, perhaps at the cost of his own. Mr. Henderson had recognized both Joe and his niece at the moment they were hurled aside by the machine, and he rushed forward in a fever of anxiety. He was, of course, chiefly concerned about his niece, whom he regarded as his greatest earthly treasure. He reached the spot as the chauffeur was lifting both the victims of the accident together, for Joe's grasp on the girl was so tight that it was only with much difficulty that Elsie Grant could be taken from his convulsive grip. The side of Joe's head was covered with blood where it had struck the hard stones and his face was deathly white.

"Uncle," gasped Elsie faintly, as the merchant clasped her in his arms.

"My darling," he cried tremulously, "are you much hurt?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

He placed her on her feet and she stood up without difficulty, having really suffered no injury beyond the smashing of her hat and the partial wrecking of her gown. At that moment her eyes lighted on Joe as he was carried to the sidewalk and she uttered a suppressed scream.

"Joe Sturgess!" she cried. "He saved my life. Is he dead?"

"I hope not, my dear. Come with me."

"Oh, uncle, never mind me. Do look after Mr. Sturgess, please do," she begged with tears in her eyes and deep anxiety in her tones.

"I will see that everything is done for him, never fear, Elsie. I saw him grab you and swing you away from the automobile, and then the machine struck him, and you were both hurled many feet away. I sincerely trust that he may not be seriously injured. I'd rather lose \$50,000 than that he should die."

"Oh, he mustn't die, uncle; indeed, he mustn't," she quivered tearfully.

A big crowd gathered about the senseless and apparently badly injured boy as he was laid on the edge of the sidewalk by the chauffeur. A policeman came up and drove the curious onlookers back as well as he could. The owner of the machine was deeply agitated and concerned over the accident. There was no doubt that the chauffeur would be arrested, and all kinds of trouble was likely to follow, especially if the boy should die. The capitalist had a vision of heavy damages whether the boy died or not.

Elsie wanted to go to Joe and help him, but Mr. Henderson objected on the ground that she could be of no use. He took her into the store, where the report of the accident was already being circulated, though nobody knew who the victims were. Calling a floor-walker he directed him to take his niece up to his private room, where she was told to wait until he had found out just how serious Joe's injuries were. An ambulance was summoned, and arrived in unusually quick time. The surgeon examined the boy and announced that one of his arms and a rib were broken, and that he had suffered a number of minor injuries. Whether he was internally hurt also he declined to say. The lad would have to be taken to the hospital and subjected to a critical overhauling by the house surgeon before a definite opinion could be passed on his case. So Joe, still unconscious, was put into the ambulance and driven away. Mr. Henderson, as soon as he reached his private room told Elsie what the ambulance surgeon had said.

"Poor boy!" she cried sympathetically. "Oh, uncle, I shall be dreadfully unhappy if he should die. You don't think he will do you?"

"I should feel deeply grieved myself if he did," replied the merchant earnestly. "We must hope for the best. He is a brave, chivalrous lad. I will spend thousands of dollars, if necessary, to save him."

"Of course you will, uncle, for he saved my life," she said sobbingly.

Mr. Henderson called the hospital up on the 'phone and asked for the head surgeon. As soon as he got the doctor on the wire he told him about the accident and requested that everything that his skill could suggest must be done for the boy.

"Spare no expense whatever," said the merchant. "The boy must be saved at any cost, for he saved my niece's life and I am deeply grateful to him."

"The ambulance hasn't reached here yet, Mr. Henderson," replied the surgeon, "but as soon as it does I will give the case my special attention and let you know just how badly injured the boy is, and what the chances are for his recovery."

"I will make you a handsome present if you pull him around all right."

"Thank you, sir; but that isn't necessary. As long as you guarantee to meet all extra expenses we will put him in a room by himself, and I will detail special nurses to look after him."

"I have told you to spare no expense. Don't let money stand in the way. Let him have the very best treatment the hospital can afford and have the bill sent to me."

"All right, Mr. Henderson. You may depend that everything will be done for him."

An hour later, after Elsie had been sent home in a cab, the merchant was called up by the hospital.

"I have given the patient a thorough examination and am glad to report that he has not sustained any vital injuries, Mr. Henderson. He is now conscious and in bed in a private room, with a special nurse in attendance. His most serious hurts are a fractured rib and a broken left arm. He has suffered many contusions, the worst of which is a deep cut in the skull. There is no fracture, however, and he is bound to come out all right in a short time. There is no occasion for you to worry about him."



"I should be glad to receive a daily report of his condition," said the merchant, feeling greatly relieved.

"I will arrange that you shall have it," replied the head surgeon.

Elsie awaited her uncle's return home in a fever of anxious impatience. She could not bear the thought that her brave rescuer should die. His fate had become a matter of the utmost importance to her. She watched from the sitting-room window for the approach of her uncle's auto. When it hove in sight she flew downstairs and met him in the hall.

"I have good news for you, Elsie," Mr. Henderson said, noting her anxious look.

"Then Joe Sturgess won't die," she cried joyfully.

"The head surgeon assured me that he would come around all right in a short time."

Elsie threw her arms around her uncle's neck and cried from very joy.

"I'm so glad! I'm so glad!" she cried.

"Of course you are, my dear, and so am I. He is a fine lad—a mighty fine lad."

Before Mr. Henderson left the store he despatched a note to Joe's mother, briefly explaining the accident her son had met with. He told her what hospital he had been taken to and assured her that he would be all right again in due time. He wound up with a flattering comment on the boy's bravery, and told her that he would take special care of her son's future, not only because he had a fine opinion of Joe as a smart and faithful employee, but because he was grateful to him for saving the life of his niece. Mrs. Morse was greatly startled by the receipt of this letter and hurried to the hospital at once. She was not permitted to see her son, as it was after visiting hours, but the attendant who saw her in the office told her that the boy was in no danger of losing his life. She had to be satisfied with this and returned home after ascertaining when she would be allowed to see Joe next day. The papers printed an account of the accident and stated that the chauffeur had been arrested and admitted to bail, which was furnished by his employer.

Next day the capitalist called on Mr. Henderson and offered to pay all of Joe's expenses while at the hospital and present him with any reasonable sum of money as compensation in order to save his chauffeur from prosecution and himself from a suit for damages. Mr. Henderson said that he himself had guaranteed the boy's expenses, and that no compromise would be entertained until an investigation in court had established to what extent the chauffeur was responsible for the accident. Elsie Grant called at the hospital as soon as the rules of the institution permitted her admission. She found Joe's mother by his bedside, and Joe looking and feeling as well as could be expected under the circumstances. The boy was pleased to see the charming niece of his employer show so much interest in his welfare and told her so.

He then told his mother that Miss Grant was Mr. Henderson's niece. Elsie and Mrs. Morse took quite a fancy to each other, and Joe was glad to see them on a friendly footing. Finally Elsie left, saying she would call every day to see him. After she had gone the boy often glanced with pleasure at the bouquet of roses the girl had

brought to him. Elsie kept her word and called every day, bringing flowers each time. Mr. Henderson also called several times, assured the boy of his gratitude and warm friendship and promised him a higher position in the office when he was up and doing once more. On the following Wednesday when Elsie called Joe was much better.

"Yes, I'm feeling quite chipper today," he told her. "I believe I promised to call on you this evening. I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me," he added with a smile. "The doctor wouldn't think of letting me out of bed yet a while."

"Of course he wouldn't," she laughed. "Your excuse is accepted. I shall expect to see you at our house when you are fully recovered. I guess you haven't any doubts now about your welcome. I told uncle that I invited you, and he said he will be glad to have you call whenever it is convenient for you."

Although his mother called every day, Elsie's visits were just as eagerly looked forward to by Joe. She was like a ray of sunshine coming into the room, and the boy always looked brighter for her coming. He thought her the loveliest girl he had ever met in his life, and he began to think more of her than was really good for him, considering the wide difference of their social standing. He found it far from pleasant to have his body encased in a plaster-of-paris jacket while his fractured rib was knitting, and his broken arm also pained him a good bit at times. The cut in his head gradually healed up, and the other bruises disappeared before he was able to leave his bed. At length he was allowed to walk about with his arm in a sling. He now spent most of his time in the hospital garden, for the weather was fine, and there he received his daily visitors. Finally he was declared well enough to leave the hospital for good, and that was a happy day for him.

## CHAPTER XI.—In Which Elsie Grant Entertains Joe at Her Home.

When Joe reported again at the store he found himself a hero for fair. Everybody had long since read in the newspapers about his gallant rescue of Elsie Grant, the merchant's niece, and there were lots of the salesgirls who felt real jealous about the matter. They would much have preferred being rescued by him, for many of the girls were smitten by Joe's good looks and captivated by his gentlemanly manners. They did not like the idea that another girl had enjoyed the honor they coveted, but they took comfort from the fact that the fortunate young lady was so far above Joe's station that nothing serious was likely, in their opinion, to result from it.

Mr. Henderson had decided to advance Joe in the office, so the boy was made general assistant to the cashier. The position was practically created for him, and his wages were advanced to \$15 a week. The wages began on the week he was injured and he received back salary for all the time he was away. Many of his former duties were attached to the position, and among other things he continued to carry the leather bag with the day's receipts to the bank. The case against the capitalist's chauffeur had been postponed until Joe was able to go into court. He and Elsie



appeared and testified concerning the unexpected appearance of the auto from behind the cabs, and both declared that, in their opinion, the man was going faster than he should have done in a crowded thoroughfare.

The chauffeur, of course, denied that he had been going fast at all, and his employer naturally backed him up. A diagram of the street at the point where the accident happened, on which the positions of the car, cabs and auto were shown, was submitted in evidence. The object of this was to show that had the chauffeur exercised proper caution he would have turned out at so slow a speed that he could have stopped his machine before reaching Joe and the girl. Each side was represented by a legal luminary of reputation, and considerable eloquence and argument expended on the magistrate. As some doubt remained in the judge's mind as to the exact culpability of the chauffeur he simply assessed him \$100 fine, which his employer immediately paid and that settled the matter.

Joe and Elsie, however, still had the privilege of bringing suit against the capitalist, through their guardians, for a considerable amount. The gentleman was advised by his lawyer to compromise the matter out of court if he could do so. Accordingly he approached Mr. Henderson on the subject. The merchant said that he thought Joe was entitled to compensation for the injuries he had suffered in saving Elsie Grant from being run down by the machine.

"If that boy had not been on hand at the critical moment your auto would in all likelihood have killed or fatally injured my niece. In that case you would have found yourself in a very serious position, Mr. Drew. Joe Sturgess saved you from that, and that act alone, even if he had not been hurt, would have merited your consideration. As for my niece, although she was not actually hurt, still she suffered from the shock, and I have been advised by my lawyer that a sufficient cause for an action in a civil court exists against you. My niece, however, is willing to waive her rights in the matter if you do the right thing by young Sturgess."

"I am willing to give the young man my check for \$5,000. It is probably as much as a jury would award him if he were successful," said the capitalist.

Mr. Henderson agreed to settle the matter for that amount, and so after a paper to that effect had been drawn up and signed by Joe, the money was paid over to him, and he deposited it in a savings bank. He was now worth \$6,000 in his own name, and he felt pretty independent. The first hundred dollars he received from Mr. Henderson he presented to his mother at the time he received the \$1,000 from his employer in connection with the leather bag affair. Joe bought a new up-to-date suit of clothes, and other things to match, in order to look as well as he could on the occasion of his first visit to Elsie Grant at her uncle's swell residence on Commonwealth Avenue. We are bound to say that after he had got all tucked out he compared very favorably with any of the young lady's male acquaintances. It was so unusual for Joe to make a call on any girl, let alone such a wealthy connected miss as Elsie Grant, that the boy felt decidedly nervous over his first appearance in what might be called Boston society.

When he alighted from a car a block below his destination and started toward Mr. Henderson's house he began to be conscious that a species of stage fright was coming over him. The nearer he drew to the house the worse he got. When he finally reached it he walked right on till he came to the next corner, for he could not muster up enough courage to enter the gate and ring the bell. He turned around, mentally kicked himself, and started back for the house. But his funk came on again and once more he passed the house.

"Hello, Sturgess, where are you going?" called out a voice.

Joe stopped and looked at a gentleman who had also stopped and was regarding him intently. The boy recognized Mr. Henderson.

"Just going to your house, sir," he replied.

"Why, you've passed it. You're going out of your way. Come with me and I'll take you there. I was out on a little call and am just going back."

He took the boy by the arm, and Joe knew now that he'd have to face the music. Mr. Henderson entered with his latch key and took Joe up to the sitting-room, where they found Elsie, in a stylish gown, waiting for the maid to announce that Joe had arrived. She was surprised to see her uncle lead her visitor into the room unheralded. She hastened to welcome Joe and make him feel at home. Although the sitting-room was very modestly furnished for a mansion on Commonwealth Avenue, Joe had never seen such a fine room before. The gilt chairs looked so frail that he was afraid to sit on one, while the *tete-a-tete*, a sort of compound chair shaped like the letter S, looked so unusual to him that he was going to avoid it when Elsie led him to it and indicated that he was to take possession of one of the seats while she gracefully sat in the other, which brought the central curve of the letter S between them, across which they carried on their conversation.

Joe gradually thawed out under the fascinating influence exercised on him by Miss Elsie, who had the art of winning her way into the hearts of her visitors and friends down to a fine point. Inside of half an hour Joe was talking with her as if he had known her for years, and he was enjoying every moment of the *tete-a-tete*. She got him to talk about himself, and his hopes and ambitions, and then she told him about the fashionable school she was attending; and what she was learning there. As the evening wore away she asked him if he liked music, and finding that he was particularly partial to it she went to a fine upright piano that stood against one of the walls of the room and played some of her favorite pieces.

Then she sang several songs for him in so charming a voice and style that Joe was more taken with her than ever. Finally the clock on the mantel struck ten, and the boy, who was having the time of his life, reluctantly suggested that it was time for him to go. She easily induced him to remain half an hour longer and then accompanied him to the front door.

"You must come again soon," she said, in such a bewitching way that Joe replied that it would afford him much pleasure to do so.

Then he took his leave, feeling assured that Elsie was the finest girl in the world, and conscious that she occupied a very large share of his thoughts.



## CHAPTER XII.—How Joe Fell a Victim to the Plans of Three Crooks.

Three months elapsed and Joe became a regular Wednesday night visitor of Elsie Grant's. Although all concerned in the leather bag robbery, Bentley Morse excepted, were serving time, the episode had not been forgotten by two experienced crooks who had read about the matter in the papers, and attended the trial of Seton Hall and Homer Carroll. The large amount of money that was daily sent to the Tradesmen's Bank from the Henderson department store excited their curiosity, and they put their heads together for the purpose of devising some means of stealing the bag themselves. They proceeded to watch both the store and the bank to discover who the new messenger was, and it wasn't long before they found out that Joe Sturgess was the successor of Carroll, but they were disappointed to find that he did not carry the bag on foot, as Carroll had done, but in either an automobile or a cab.

Under these circumstances it looked as if there was a poor show of getting away with the bag with any chance of success. After some months had passed they mentioned the matter to a third crook, and the three held a pow-wow on the subject.

"If that boy made a practice of going to the bank every day in a cab we could figure out some way of getting the best of him and making away with the bag," said one of the crooks; "but as it is only about once in two or three weeks that he uses a cab I don't see how we can manage the job. It is simply out of the question to get at the bag in an open auto on a crowded street. If the three of us held up the auto and managed to get the bag we'd be run down before we got a block away unless we had extraordinary luck."

"Why does the messenger take a cab at all if it's his practice to use an auto?" asked the new man, whose name was Jim Brady.

"He takes it when he can't get the auto, I guess. If we wanted to reach him and the bag through the cab we'd have to watch the store every day around eleven o'clock and be prepared to act when we saw him take the cab. I don't see that it would be any easier to hold the cab up than the auto. I think we'd get caught in either case if you want to know my opinion."

"I don't think so," said Brady. "My idea would be to play off drunk and get in front of the horse so the driver would have to rein in to avoid running me down. As soon as the cab came to a standstill you two chaps could seize the chance to open the cab door, jump in, grab the messenger and choke or drug him. Then one could step out and follow the cab and the other could drop the bag out when he saw the best chance while I would cover the retreat of the man who picked it up."

"I know a better way if it could be made to work."

"Let's hear it."

The crook outlined his plan, and his companions agreed that it was all right if it could be pulled off, but the chances seemed to be rather slim. A week later when the cashier of the department store was ready to send the previous day's receipts to the bank, Mr. Henderson's auto was not available, that gentleman not having

reached the store yet. The cashier waited for nearly an hour and then told Joe to go and get a cab. He got one without trouble, and told the driver to bring his vehicle around to the employees' entrance on the back street. When the driver did so, a man, who had been standing for over an hour in the neighborhood asked him if he had been engaged to go to the Tradesmen's Bank. The driver nodded.

"Then come with me."

The speaker led the cabman upstairs in the building adjoining Henderson's store, and told him to wait on the landing till the young man who had engaged him came out of one of the doors and asked him to help him down with a bag. While the unsuspecting driver watched the door in question the man who had brought him up hurried downstairs and mounted to the cabby's seat. Joe presently came out of the store entrance with the bank bag in his hand, saw the waiting cab, and as the bogus driver kept his face averted he thought it was the man he had engaged, especially as the cab was the right one.

"Get to the bank as soon as you can," he said to the man on the box, and then entered the cab.

The vehicle started off at a smart rate, but slowed up at the first corner and took another man on the box. Two blocks further on it got tangled up with sundry other vehicles and had to stop. The man who had been taken up got down and opened the door of the cab.

"What do you want?" asked Joe, placing his hand in his pocket where he carried his revolver.

The man half stepped in and grabbed his arm just as the opposite door was opened and Jim Brady got in, leaned forward and placed a handkerchief containing some drug over the boy's face. The first man then got fully in and slammed the door. Joe made a desperate struggle against the two men, but the drug was a powerful one and he became unconscious about the time the cab started up again. The cab continued on at a hot speed, turning into other streets until it finally drew up in front of a three-story red brick dwelling, much in vogue thirty or more years since.

One of the men in the cab got out, glanced up and down the street and around in a wary way, and then, walking to the basement door, pulled an old-fashioned bell handle. The tinkle of a bell somewhere at the end of an entry reached his ears, and presently the door was opened by a hard-looking man of perhaps thirty-five. Nothing more repulsive in the shape of a human being could be imagined than this individual. He was thin, gaunt and bony, like the animated skeleton of a sideshow. His face was long and had very high cheek bones, after which the flesh receded suddenly, leaving two hollow cavities beneath. This peculiarity, added to a heavy protruding jaw, full of large teeth, which he could rattle like a pair of castanets, and a pair of eyes deeply sunken in their sockets, gave him a skull-like appearance that was truly horrible.

"Hold the door open, Jud," said the man from the cab, "we've got a visitor to fetch into the house."

"All right, Jim," replied the animated skeleton, with a ghastly grin.

Jim returned to the cab where he assisted his companion on the inside to lift out the unconscious Joe Sturgess and carry him into the house. The driver descended from his perch and followed



them with the bag containing the day's receipts of the department store. In a few minutes the bogus cabby returned to the sidewalk, remounted his seat and drove away.

### CHAPTER XIII.—In Which the Unexpected Happens.

When Joe regained his senses he found himself in a dark, cellar-like place. Joe's first impression of his quarters, as he sat up and inspected it in no little wonder, was not particularly reassuring. His idea was that he was laboring under some kind of a nightmare which would presently wear off. He rubbed his eyes once or twice to take a better look around, but it did not materially improve his vision.

"If this is a dream it's a pretty realistic one," he muttered.

What other remarks his surroundings might have conjured up it is impossible to say, but at that point the attack made upon him in the cab suddenly unrolled itself before his mind's eye.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "This thing is no dream after all, but the real thing. I've been robbed of the bank bag by a couple of crooks and then brought to this hole to be kept a prisoner until they consider it safe to release me. What will Mr. Henderson say when he learns that I failed to successfully defend his property even with a revolver in my possession, in the broad daylight and on a crowded thoroughfare?"

He got on his feet and walked around the room. He found an iron door in one of the walls, but it was securely locked. There seemed to be no other mode of entrance or exit. He gave himself up to gloomy reflections. As soon as he failed to return to the store within a reasonable time the cashier would undoubtedly communicate with the bank, and when it was learned that neither he nor the bag had turned up at the bank the matter would be at once reported to the superintendent, and Mr. Harker would in turn call Mr. Henderson's attention to the fact.

Of course a detective or two would be called in to investigate, but by that time the thieves would have skipped the city with the contents of the bag, and the money might never be restored. Thus half an hour elapsed, though it seemed more than twice that long to Joe. Then there was a sound at the door. The bolt outside was drawn back, the big key clicked in the lock, and the door was opened with some caution by the man with the death's head. He carried a lantern in one hand, and in the other a tray with some dishes on it. Joe turned around and surveyed the newcomer with a look not unmixed with fear, for the fellow looked terribly grotesque in the ghostly light of the lantern.

"So yer've come to yer senses, have yer?" chuckled Jud, pausing near the door.

"I have," replied Joe, regarding the horrible looking visitor nervously.

"Where am I?" asked Joe curiously.

"You're in a cellar."

"I know that. I mean, whereabouts in Boston?"

"I can't put you up to that. It ain't safe. You'll be allowed to go in a day or two, and we

don't want the perlice to know nothin' about this crib if we kin help it, see?"

"I was drugged and robbed in a cab, wasn't I?"

"I don't know nothin' about it. All I know is that you was brought here, and I was told to take good care of you till I got orders to let yer go."

"Then you won't tell me anything?"

"Nope. It wouldn't do yer any good anyway."

"It was a pretty slick game that was worked on me," said Joe, in a sore tone of voice.

The animated skeleton grinned.

"I hadn't time even to draw my——"

For the first time Joe thought of the small revolver he always carried with him when he went to the bank. He instinctively put his hand in his pocket where he kept it during the trip. He didn't expect to find it there, for he supposed that the thieves had relieved him of it. To his surprise and satisfaction his fingers closed upon it. The rascals had not ever taken the trouble to search him. Immediately a daring idea occurred to him. The door was partly open and nothing stood between him and the outside of the cellar but the hideous rascal with the skull's head. Whether the fellow was armed or not Joe believed he could overawe him with his loaded weapon. At any rate the plucky boy determined to make a break for freedom. Perhaps he would not be too late to put the police on the track of the thieves and the money, which they had no doubt long since taken from the bag. The mere chance that he might be able to do something to retrieve his reputation appealed thrillingly to the boy. His interrupted sentence and the sudden look in Joe's eyes were not without their effect on the man with the dead head. Suspecting that the prisoner was contemplating a sudden move, the man whirled about and started for the door.

"Stop!" cried Joe, drawing his revolver and covering the rascal. "Another step and I'll shoot!"

Joe stopped in an undecided way and glanced over his shoulder. He didn't really expect to see a weapon in the prisoner's hand. When he did see the light of the lantern glistening from the barrel of Joe's revolver he uttered a gasp and stood transfixed.

### CHAPTER XIV.—How Joe Makes An Effort to Recover the Stolen Money.

"Throw up your hands and step back here," ordered Joe in a resolute tone.

The grotesque looking rascal hesitated and seemed on the point of making a dash out through the door. Had it been wide open he might have chanced it, but the few seconds he would need to pull the iron door open so he could pass through would easily give time enough for the boy to put a couple of balls into his body if he chose. It was true the report of the weapon would attract the attention of his pals who were upstairs at the time, and they would probably be able to prevent the prisoner's escape; but Jud had a whole lot of respect for his own life, and he didn't care to sacrifice it for the benefit of his associates. Noting the man's indecision, Joe stepped from behind the packing case and advanced near the rascal.

"Get over on that bed," cried Joe in a voice that showed he meant business.

"Hang you!" snarled the death's head. "Where did yer get that gun?"



"That's for me to know and you to find out. Are you going to make a move?"

"You daren't fire," said Jud doggedly. "There's three chaps upstairs who'd hear the report and they'd be down on you like a load of bricks."

"I'll chance that. I've got six bullets in this gun. One is enough to settle you, the other five will stand off your friends, I'll bet. I'll give you half a minute to make up your mind whether you'll do as I have told you or take the consequences. I'm going to get out of here if I have to shoot every man in the house."

Joe spoke as if he meant what he said, and Jud concluded it would be wise to give in to what appeared to be the inevitable. He shuffled over to the bed and sat down on it.

"Lie down!" commanded the boy.

Jud obeyed.

"Turn over on your face."

The man turned over. Joe quickly seized a piece of cord he saw hanging from a nail and knelt on the fellow's back. Laying down his revolver he seized Jud's wrists and drew them behind him. The rascal began to struggle.

"Stop that or I'll shoot a hole through you!" cried Joe.

The man subsided and the boy tied his wrists tightly together. As a further precaution he tied his ankles also. The man with the death's head was now helpless. Joe rose, took up his weapon, also took possession of the lantern and walked out of the cellar, closing and rebolting the door after him. He found himself in an open space with a stairway leading to the first floor. He walked up with due caution and reached an entry. Then he paused and listened. The man with the death's head had remarked that there were three men up above. Two of them, Joe argued, must be the thieves who had attacked and done him up. If they were in the house they no doubt had the money with them.

Joe wondered why they had not skipped the town with their ill-gotten booty. He didn't know that they were waiting for dark which was coming on before venturing to take a train for New York City. Their faces were well known to every detective in the city, and though they had sent out and purchased false beards and whiskers, they determined to make their escape doubly sure. At the end of the entry was the door leading to the sidewalk and through which the boy had been brought into the house. Joe, hearing no sounds, made his way to it and saw that it was both locked and bolted in two places. As the key was in the lock, and the bolts worked almost noiselessly, the boy soon had the door open and was looking out into a quiet, shady street.

"I wonder what part of Boston this is?" he mused. "It's evidently a residential section. They brought me here in the cab, of course. Well, it won't take me many minutes to find out where I am as soon as I leave this house, and there's nothing to prevent me doing that as far as I can see. Still, if Mr. Henderson's money is here I ought to make a try to recover it. With my revolver I think I can hold my own against the three scamps if I can take them off their guard. It's pretty near sundown I see. I'll bet there are several detectives out looking for me by this time, and I'll gamble on it that there's been considerable excitement in the office this afternoon."

Leaving the door unlocked Joe listened at the

door of the front basement room. Hearing nothing inside he ventured to open the door and look inside. The room was furnished as a dining-room on a cheap scale. There was nobody in there. Joe passed on to the back room, which was a kitchen, and he found a lot of dirty dishes on a plain deal table waiting to be washed. There was the remains of a fire in the stove, and he guessed that the man with the death's head looked after the cooking arrangement. Taking off his shoes, Joe walked up to the next floor. Here he heard plenty of evidences of occupation proceeding from the front room. He distinguished at least three men laughing and talking in there, and smelt the odor of burning tobacco. He also heard the clinking of glasses which showed that the men were drinking. From the little he could hear of their conversation he guessed they were playing cards.

There was a door communicating with what he judged to be the back parlor, and he took the risk of opening it and looking in. The folding doors between the rooms were open a few inches, and through the aperture Joe heard the voices of the men quite plainly. He put on his shoes and glided in, closing the door after him. Going to the opening between the doors he saw three men gathered around a centre table drinking, smoking and playing cards for money. And the stakes were not small either, for each man appeared to be well supplied with cash. As Joe recognized two of the men as those who had entered the cab and overpowered him, he had no difficulty in surmising where the money they were playing for came from. On the floor in one corner lay the leather bag, with a great, gaping slit in it made by a knife.

"I never seen such luck as you're havin', Jim Brady," said one of the men with an imprecation, as the man named Jim gathered in the stakes that had been deposited in the centre of the table. "I thought I could play poker, and so did Bill here, but everythin' seems to be goin' your way."

"You mustn't mind that," chuckled Brady. "The ladies all say I have a very taking way about me. In fact I think we've all a taking way about us—it's our business to take whatever we can lay our hands on."

"Well, as I want a few thousands to sport on when we get there I think I'll quit. And I guess if Chick don't want you to cotton on his share of today's job he'll drop out, too," said Bill.

"We've got an hour or two to put in before train time, so we might as well keep on," said Brady persuasively. "Luck is liable to turn your way any time, and you may both recover all I've won from you."

As Chick was willing to continue the game Bill reluctantly took another hand. Joe Sturgess looked at the three men and wondered how he was going to get the better of them. At that moment Brady picked up the whisky bottle and found it empty.

"There's another bottle downstairs. Who's going for it?" he said.

"What's the matter with makin' Jud fetch it up?" asked Bill.

"Then go out in the hall and yell for him," said Jim.

Bill got up and going to the head of the stairs shouted to Jud; but as the man with the death's head was bound and locked up in the cellar he



couldn't very well answer. The crook yelled several times, and getting no response he grumbly went down into the basement after the whisky himself. A sudden idea occurred to Joe Sturgess, and he slipped out of the back parlor and followed him. He heard Bill in the dining-room and cautiously looked in at that room. Bill was drawing the cork of the whisky bottle with his back to the door. Joe grabbed a small rolling pin, slipped up behind Bill and with one blow laid him out senseless on the floor.

"That's one disposed of," breathed the boy. "If Chick or Brady will come down hunting for him I'll give him a dose of the same medicine, and then I'll have only one left to handle."

With this reflection in his mind Joe, after relieving the crook of all his stealings, which amounted to several thousand dollars, retired to the kitchen to await developments.

#### CHAPTER XV.—Striking It Rich.

Five minutes passed and then Joe heard one of the men come to the head of the stairs and yell to Bill, asking what was keeping him so long below. As a matter of course he got no answer, for Bill was not in a condition to reply to the hail. Presently Joe heard the man, who he recognized as Chick, coming down, and he slipped behind the kitchen door. As Chick walked into the kitchen something hit him on the head and he ceased to take any more interest in things. Joe went through his pockets and got about the same amount from him that he had taken from Bill, then he dragged the rascal into the dining-room.

"That's number two," chuckled Joe. "Brady is sure to come down also when they fail to return, and I guess it's safer to meet him here than upstairs. That rolling pin is safer and surer than a revolver. I must hunt up a bag to put the money in."

He found a clothes bag and had just finished stuffing the notes into it when Jim Brady came to the head of the stairs and roared out:

"What in thunder is keeping you chaps downstairs?"

Receiving no reply, he yelled again, but with no better result. Then he also came downstairs, swearing like a trooper. Joe lay in wait for him and laid him out as stiff as the others.

"Gee! But this has been easy," he laughed.

He took about \$16,000 out of Brady's pockets, and then with some clothes line he not only tied the crooks hand and foot, but tied them together as well. Returning upstairs he examined the leather bag and found the bankbook and the checks in it. He decided to put the money back in the bag and tie up the opening with a piece of cloth. After doing that he left the house. He made a note of the number of the house, and on reaching the corner saw the name of the street, and then knew that he was in South Boston.

He went to a telephone station, found out the number of the nearest police station and got the officer in charge on the wire. He told him the story of the robbery of the leather bag; how he had been carried to a certain house in a certain street in South Boston by the crooks and locked up a prisoner in the cellar, and how he had managed to turn the tables on the rascals and recover the stolen money.

"Send a patrol wagon with officers to this tele-

phone station and I'll guide them to the house where the crooks are tied up," concluded Joe.

In a short time the wagon with half a dozen policemen arrived. Joe got in the wagon and it was driven to the house. The three senseless crooks in the dining-room, and the man with the death's head in the cellar were loaded on the wagon, taken to the station and locked up. As the police insisted on retaining the leather bag and its contents Joe had to give it up.

Then he took a car for his home, which he reached in good time for supper. He told his surprised mother about his adventure with the crooks and she could hardly believe him, it seemed so strange. Hurriedly dressing himself in his best clothes he started for Mr. Henderson's home on Commonwealth Avenue. He reached there just as the merchant and his niece were finishing dinner.

"Why, Sturgess," cried Mr. Henderson, "where have you been since you left the store with the money bag? The driver of the cab you engaged came into the store soon after your departure and raised a big fuss, saying that his cab had been stolen. On 'phoning the bank and finding you had not arrived, foul play was suspected by the superintendent, who immediately notified the police. Several detectives have been looking for you and the cab all afternoon, and are still on the scent. Let me know what happened to you."

Thereupon Joe told his story to the astonished merchant and his niece.

"Upon my word, you are a wonderful boy," cried Mr. Henderson. "You may have been easy for the thieves at the start because they took you off your guard, but you've more than redeemed yourself by capturing them and recovering the money."

Elsie couldn't compliment Joe enough, and declared he was the greatest boy on earth. The story was in all the papers next day, and Joe was well praised for his courage and skill in the matter. Eventually the four crooks were tried and sent up for ten years each, except the man with the death's head, and he only got three years. Mr. Henderson insisted on giving Joe \$5,000 as an evidence of his appreciation.

From that time Joe's advancement was rapid until he was finally made assistant superintendent of the store. Two years later he was promoted to the post of superintendent. Before he assumed his duties there was a quiet wedding at the Henderson home, the principals of which were Joe and Elsie. After their wedding tour they took up their home with Mr. Henderson. For ten years Joe filled the post of superintendent at the store, and then the death of Mr. Henderson made Mrs. Joe Sturgess, nee Elsie Grant, sole owner of the establishment, and Joe stepped into the late Mr. Henderson's private office as the general manager of his wife's interests.

Practically he was the owner of the big store, and was regarded as such by the employees and all he had dealings with. Thus Joe Sturgess rose from the humble capacity of office boy in the store to that of merchant prince, another instance of an ambitious and smart American boy striking it rich.

Next week's issue will contain: "LUCKY IN WALL STREET; OR, THE BOY WHO TRIMMED THE BROKERS."



## TRUE GRIT

or

## An Engineer at Eighteen

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

## CHAPTER XV.—(Continued)

"Well, that's meaner than dirt!" he exclaimed, indignantly. "I'd give something to know who did that. If it was a member of the club, he wouldn't last any longer than I could call a special meeting and have him bounced. Suspect anybody?"

"Do you?"

The boys looked at one another significantly, but they didn't speak their thoughts. It was clear that each had the same idea in his head.

"I'll have to go back and borrow a wheel at the repair shop," said Bob. "Go ahead. I'll catch up in half an hour."

"It's a dead shame!" said Bruce.

Then the chums parted.

But when Bob reached the repair shop it was closed. The man, who also handled phonographs and records, had gone up the street to deliver an Edison machine, and our young fireman was obliged to wait three-quarters of an hour before he turned up.

The man examined the damaged bike and said it was a scurvy trick. Then he loaned Bob the best wheel in his shop.

"It's a corker, Blake," he said. "If you want to make time she'll do it."

When Bob reached the mountain road he saw ahead of him a phaeton with two girls and also another young lady on horseback. He knew who they were and hastened to catch up.

"Why, Bob Blake!" exclaimed Myrtle Kent, with a look of great surprise, "what are you doing way back here?"

"Come, Bob, give an account of yourself," cried his sister from the phaeton.

While Bob was explaining matters a passenger train whizzed by the crossing a hundred feet ahead.

Myrtle's mare became frightened, reared up, took the bit in her teeth and started up the road at a rapid gait.

Bob was after the runaway like a flash, and the rate he began to work the pedals soon made the machine hum.

But the mare hadn't been out of her stable for a week, and she was in trim to lead her pursuer a stiff chase.

The phaeton soon vanished around a turn in the road. Inch by inch Bob gained on the runaway. It was an exciting race, rather too exciting, in fact, for Myrtle Kent, who had all she could do to hold on. She occasionally cast frightened glances back at Bob, wondering if he would ever catch up with the mare.

It was a hot pace for the boy to maintain, but he set his teeth together and spurted for all he was worth. At that moment a pair of lumbering oxen, drawing a big load of hay, came out of an

adjoining lane and took full possession of the road.

"Great Jupiter!" exclaimed Bob, as he saw the obstruction ahead, "there isn't room for the mare to pass. And if she strikes the wagon Myrtle will be killed!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

## How Bob Saves Myrtle Kent's Life and the Young Lady Discloses an Interesting Secret.

The still terrified mare rushed onward at full speed as if unconscious of the obstruction that blocked the roadway.

Bob saw that unless he could overtake the animal in the short distance that remained open the horse and its fair rider would be dashed against either the oxen or the unwieldy wagon.

Such a collision could mean but little else than fatal injury to both.

"Heaven help me to save her!" muttered the boy, as he applied every ounce of speed his already overtaxed muscles were capable of.

He crept up nearer each fleeting second and presently overlapped the mare's hind quarters, but he never would have reached the animal's head except that she stumbled and lost her stride for an instant.

In that brief span of time, while his overtaxed heart beat like a sledge-hammer and the perspiration oozed from every pore of his body, he made a last supreme effort, and as the wheel glided up alongside the mare, he threw his arms about her neck and, drawing himself up, his bike slid into the ditch, while he clung like grim death to the now snorting and staggering animal, fairly crowding her against the fence, so that they just managed to clear the wagon by a hair.

A hundred feet further on the horse came to a gradual stop, when Bob's grasp relaxed and he rolled over into the road in a dead faint.

When he came to his senses, perhaps a minute later, he found Myrtle holding his head in her lap, while the poor girl was crying bitterly and begging him to open his eyes and speak to her.

"Oh, Bob, don't say that you're going to die!" Myrtle moaned, half hysterically. "I can't let you die. I can't! I can't! I can't!"

The boy was so done up, though he had suffered no material injury, that he could not utter a word.

"You mustn't die, dear, dear Bob!" sobbed the girl, bending over and kissing him two or three times while she tenderly stroked his damp forehead.

Poor Myrtle was so excited she scarcely knew what she was doing, but, nevertheless, her actions unconsciously expressed the sentiments of her young heart.

She had always liked Bob, perhaps thought more of him than she cared to admit even to herself, but now that she felt he had probably saved her life, at maybe the cost of his own, he suddenly became the hero of her heart.

But Bob wasn't going to die just then. What is more, he hadn't even broken a bone or lost an ounce of blood. He was simply exhausted by the desperate efforts he had made to catch the runaway mare and save—yes, it may as well be admitted—the girl of his heart.

And now he was rapidly recovering, but...



hypocrite that he was, he found it very pleasant to lie still in the road and listen to Myrtle's musical voice and feel the gentle caresses she was showering upon him, well knowing that the unusual circumstances had thrown the dear, innocent girl off her guard.

Finally Bob concluded that he was as good as ever, and reluctantly sat up.

"Are you much hurt?" Myrtle asked, and there was no such thing as mistaking that look of anxious solicitude which shone from her tear-brimmed eyes.

"I guess not," replied Bob, cheerfully. "Had an awful shaking up, you know, but I've got as many lives as a cat, Bruce says, so I don't think I'm going under this trip."

And to show that there was still some hope for him, he jumped to his feet and turned a hand-spring to limber himself up.

Myrtle looked astonished.

"You're not hurt a bit, are you?" she said, joyfully.

"Not that I know of," he answered, gaily. "Still, if you really think I've broken a bone or two we can stop at the blacksmith's down the road and have him nail 'em together."

"You horrid boy! How can you talk so? And I've been so worried——"

She stopped suddenly and blushed as red as the reddest rose you ever saw, for she recollected how she had kissed Bob in her excitement, and it wasn't improbable that he was aware of what she had done.

Bob suspected the reason for her confusion and with proper tact made a big bluff at catching the mare, who, by this time, having recovered her usual serenity, was cropping the straggling blades of grass by the roadside.

Then he politely assisted Myrtle into the saddle and hunted up his wheel, which, to his great satisfaction, he found had escaped injury.

At this moment the basket phaeton, containing Bob's sister and Miss Hardy, came around a turn of the road at a spanking pace.

They had been obliged to turn up a lane in order to avoid the load of hay which had so well night resulted disastrously to Bob and the runaway.

Thus the party were soon together again, and the three girls set up such a chatter that our young fireman could hardly hear himself think, as he afterwards expressed it.

When they reached the Glen House at the entrance to Round Top Glen they found the place in possession of the Rushville Bicycle Club and its invited guests.

The veranda was lined with boys and girls, and more were inside inspecting the long dining-room where the dance was to take place after dinner.

Chet King and Abe Pindar, while on the lookout for Myrtle Kent and Laura Hardy, were making themselves as fresh as possible with every young lady who would notice them.

One not familiar with their ways would have supposed they were the whole thing. Certainly Chet lost no opportunity to impress his self-importance on the crowd. He wouldn't have felt flattered had he heard how the boys geyed him behind his back, and how most of the fair guests of the club held his pretensions up to ridicule.

The arrival of Bob and the three girls was received with great enthusiasm.

"Just in time, old fellow," said Bruce. "But it seems you were a deuced long time on the road. However, I can see the cause of it."

He gave his chum a sly wink as he jerked his thumb in the direction of Myrtle Kent.

"Oh, you be blowed," said Bob. "I've had a tumble, and I'm going in to take a wash. There's sis now looking over at you. I'll bet you're afraid to go and see what she wants," and Bob turned on his heel with a laugh and walked away.

However, Bruce wasn't afraid, and presently he and Bessie Blake were having quite a confidential chat in one corner of the veranda.

Abe Pindar managed to corner Bruce's sister for a ten-minute confab, much to his, if not to the young lady's satisfaction.

But Chet King wasn't so fortunate with Miss Kent. She had seen him making his way toward her, and had deftly joined a circle of acquaintances so as to keep him from getting in more than an occasional word.

Then Chet tried to get her to go in to dinner with him, but she said she had already promised that honor to Bob, though, of course, this was a little fib. Just leave it to the girls to side-track an undesirable admirer.

"But really, Miss Myrtle, you are treating me quite shabbily, don't you think," protested Chet.

"Why, how can you say such a thing!" said Miss Kent, opening her pretty eyes with pretended surprise. "I'm sure when I accepted Mr. Blake's invitation I couldn't possibly know that it would be my unhappy fate to disappoint you. Besides, you have so many girls, I hear, that I could hardly expect to count for much."

The sly puss hit Chet on his weak spot, and he began to feel his importance more than ever. It struck him at once that Miss Kent must be speaking from inside information. That more than one girl must have confided in her.

"I assure you, Miss Myrtle, there isn't any girl I admire half as much as I——"

"Why, there's Mr. Blake looking for me now. You will excuse me, of course," and without waiting for an answer she darted away and clutched Bob by the arm.

"I do wish you would take me into the dining-room," she said, impulsively. "I want to get away from that ridiculous Chet King. He's just too conceited for anything, and bores me dreadfully."

Of course Bob was only too delighted to oblige her.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### Bob and Myrtle Find Themselves in a Bad Fix.

"Dear me, I don't want to dance with Chester King," said Myrtle, after dinner was over and she and the stalwart young fireman were standing by standing by themselves on the side veranda. "He holds me too tightly, and steps on my toes, and——"

"He ought to be a first-class dancer," said Bob, in some surprise; "he goes to Bates' Dancing Academy, which is considered the swellest place in town. I believe you attend also, don't you?"

"Not lately," and she tapped the boards with her shapely foot, as much as to say there were reasons for her having given it up.



"I believe every one here is a good dancer," he said, "except myself."

"Why, don't you dance?" Myrtle said, in evident disappointment. "I thought Bessie said——"

"I dance a little," said Bob, "but I'm not in it with the rest of the boys."

"Then, of course, you can waltz?" she said, brightening up. "You will give me the first, won't you?" forgetting in her eagerness that it was his place to ask her.

"I will be glad to have you for a partner, Miss Myrtle, if you will promise me that you won't be angry if I should step on your toes, or——"

"You tantalizing boy," she said, archly. "I know you won't do such a thing."

"If I did I should go outside and kick myself."

"There's the music now," she said, dancing up and down.

"And there's Chet King coming to take you away from me if he can."

But King found he had to go way back and sit down till the next dance came around, and when it did Myrtle Kent was missing, and so also was Bob Blake.

"Well, I didn't see you hitting it up, old boy," said Abe, coming up wiping his face with a handkerchief. "Laura and I were in it that time, bet your sweet life."

"Oh, I didn't care for the first dance," said Chet, with affected carelessness.

"All right, chappie, s'pose we go around to the bar and have a soda."

They went, but Chet's soda had a bracer in it.

"Isn't this just too lovely for anything!"

"That's what Myrtle Kent said as she and Bob Blake stood at the entrance to a mountain gorge about a mile from the Glen House and gazed about them at the wild and romantic scenery for which the neighborhood was celebrated.

They had wandered away together after the first waltz like young people sometimes do on such occasions. Possibly they didn't intend to go far, but one step led to another, and each was interested in the other's society, and so before they realized it they had reached the gorge.

The well-known springs were about a quarter of a mile further on in the direction of the railroad, and Bob and Myrtle concluded to go there.

They had hardly started when Myrtle suddenly gave a stifled scream and pointed at a dense thicket a few yards away.

Bob looked and caught a fleeting glimpse of a rough, shaggy face that he thought resembled Bill Patterson. He wasn't sure, but, all the same, he told his companion he thought they had better turn back.

They turned about to retrace their steps when two men jumped into the gorge from among the rocks.

Hard-looking creatures they were. Men who for weeks had been almost starving in the fastnesses of the mountains. Who in sunshine had started often at the sight of their own shadows, and in wet and cold weather had shivered of nights in their rags. In a word, these men were Joe Bunker and Steve Gummitt, and truly the world had gone hard with them since the night they had tried to send Bob to his death on the pilot of engine Thirty-three.

They were now hunted men, and never more ugly and desperate. And they owed the young fireman a grudge they had often sworn to wipe

out, and it looked as if the reason why they had now exposed themselves was because the chance they had hungered for had come to them.

"So," said Bunker, showing his teeth like a famished hyena, "we meet again, eh?"

Bob felt that he was in a tight fix, and to make the matter worse he had Myrtle to defend.

Bob, instinctively putting one arm about Myrtle Kent, drew back. His action was noticed at once and Steve Gummitt laughed mockingly.

"You don't seem partic'larly glad to see us," he said, jeeringly.

Bob made no reply, but eyed the pair defiantly.

"We've been waitin' patiently for the chance to pay our respects to you," said Joe Bunker, ironically. "When a fellow of your age gets the bulge on Joe Bunker he takes his hat off to him," and the rascal bowed derisively. "Luck seems to have been on your side, but we ain't discouraged. When we make up our mind to do a thing we stick to it till we do it."

"That's what we do," said a voice behind, and Bill Patterson stepped up and laid hold of Bob's disengaged arm. "Sorry to interfere with your billin' and cooin', but business is business, and the lady'll have to excuse us, if we're a bit rough, seein' as we aren't used to perlite society."

"You're a cowardly lot of scoundrels!" exclaimed Bob, shaking his arm loose. "Man to man I'm not afraid of any one of you. But you wouldn't dare face me singly. Fellows of your stamp always want a sure thing."

"Why, you little whippersnapper, I could wring your neck myself with one hand," said Bunker, angrily. "I reckon there never was no two men on the road could do me. But we ain't got time to swop arguments with you this trip. Since we've caught you, we're goin' to hold onto you till we can settle back scores. Grab him, Steve, and you, Bill, take care of the gal, and don't hurt her, for we ain't got nothin' ag'in her."

But Bob wasn't captured as easily as they had expected, while Myrtle, much to even Bob's surprise, did not scream or exhibit symptoms of hysterics, but instead developed surprising courage for a girl of her age and habits. As the young fireman landed a heavy blow on Gummitt's face, Myrtle picked up a large stone and threw it at Patterson's head with so good an aim that the ruffian saw more stars than suited his fancy.

"You little vixen!" he yelled, as he wiped a dab of blood away, "what did you do that fer?"

Then he grabbed her roughly around the waist and clapped one of his hands over her mouth. Further resistance on her part was unavailing.

By that time Bunker and Gummitt had succeeded in securing Bob. They bound his arms behind him with a stout piece of cord, and having tied a handkerchief over Myrtle's mouth to prevent her screaming for help, the three rascals forced their prisoners to accompany them up a narrow defile which led into the less frequented regions of the mountains.

While Bob was treated with very little consideration during the toilsome journey of half an hour or more, Patterson assisted the plucky though rather frightened, Miss Kent over the roughest spots.

(To be continued)



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### ITEMS OF INTEREST

#### ITALY'S MERCURY

Notwithstanding its many mountains, Italy has little mineral wealth. Sulphur and mercury are the only minerals mined on a large scale. Italy's possession of the mercury mines of Idria since the end of the World War has made her the world's leading producer of that metal.

#### ICES FOR ESKIMOS.

Ice cream will be introduced to the Eskimos. Specially freighted ice cream is to be shipped into the Far North country from Montreal for the natives' consumption in the near future. All flavors of cream will be included in the shipment.

#### PARROT PRIMA DONNA.

A parrot, belonging to Mrs. C. H. Williams of San Antonio, Tex., sings the complete choruses of both "Tipperary" and "Silver Threads Among the Gold." For variation he whistles the tunes after singing the words.

#### HUGE METEORITE.

A ship sailed into port at Aberdeen, Scotland, recently bearing a strange load—a seven-ton rock said to be worth half a million dollars, says Popular Science Monthly. It was a gigantic meteorite on its way to a museum in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Dr. Knud Rasmussen, an explorer of the Far North, discovered the huge meteorite in 1918 in an out-of-the-way place in Greenland, sixteen miles inland. Getting it out and sending it to Denmark was too difficult a task at that time. It took the united efforts of 170 dogs to drag it, as its great weight constantly broke through the ice.

This meteorite is said to be the third largest in the world. The two bigger ones are in America and England.

#### DOG TRIED FOR SLAYING CAT BY PHILADELPHIA COURT

Teddy, a Belmont fox terrier, went on trial in police court, charged with wilfully chasing and shaking to death a six-months-old kitten. If convicted, the law will exact its severest penalty, said Police Magistrate Glenn.

The trial involved all the formality of a murder case, and is expected to hinge on the findings of a post-mortem examination of the kitten's body, which today was ordered disinterred for this purpose.

The case, prosecuted by James G. Spear, owner of the kitten, at the instance of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, produced opposing "character witnesses" and the legal gestures typical of court proceedings.

In defense of Teddy and of Almer D. Witt, his owner, who is charged with cruelty, Mrs. Thomas Sproul, president of the Woman's Auxiliary of the S. P. C. A., testified she had known Teddy since puppyhood and had never seen him chase cats or display a desire to attack them. Opposing her was Harry Leeper, supervising agent for the society, who declared "any terrier is a killer."

Pending the post-mortem examination, Magistrate Glenn postponed the next hearing of the case.

### LAUGHS

Mrs. Rose—Did your husband ever have more than one love affair? Mrs. Pose—No; only one, I believe. Mrs. Rose—And that was when he fell in love with you? Mrs. Pose—Oh, dear no; he had fallen in love with himself before he met me!

"Why are you late for school, Willie?" asked the teacher. "Well, I was crossing the street when a cop said, 'Mind the steam roller,' so I stayed and minded it until he came back."

Kind Lady—You look tired. Railroad Conductor—Yes, madam, I'm troubled with insomnia. Kind Lady—Poor fellow, why don't they put you on a sleeping-car?

Honey Child—Mamma, Miss Prim has been here an hour and the clock's going yet. Fond Mamma—What do you mean, dearie? Why shouldn't it go? Honey Child—But papa said when you told him Miss Prim was coming that she was enough to stop a clock.

"Do you consent to my marriage to Sam, father?" "Yes, my daughter," said old Jacobs, "but I can not let you leave me. You are mine, only child, and you and Samuel must live here with the old folks. You can have that second-story front room for twenty-dollars a week."

The pretty Sunday school teacher had been telling a little boy the story of a disobedient lamb that was eaten by the wolf. "You see," she said, "had the lamb been obedient and stayed in the fold it would not have been eaten by the wolf, would it?" "No, ma'am," answered the boy promptly; "it would have been eaten by us."

Mother( at 11:30 p. m.)—What's the matter, John? You looked disturbed. Father—I thought I'd give that young man calling on our daughter a vigorous hint it was time to go, so I walked into the parlor and deliberately turned out the gas. Mother—Oh, my! And did he get angry? Father—Angry? The young jackanapes said "thank you."



## Denounced on His Wedding Eve

Mildred Montroy was an orphan. I had known her mother and father well, and at the death of the latter I was appointed Mildred's guardian. Mildred was then within a year of her majority. She was, by the consent of her parents, engaged to one Wilbur Whitting, a promising young man, also an orphan, who was completing his education in Europe. When Mildred was twenty-one they were to be married. I was at this time established as a private detective in New York City.

Three months before the day set for Mildred's wedding Wilbur Whitting returned home from Europe. I had never seen him before, and I must confess that, while he was a handsome fellow, there was something in his bold and crafty glance that filled me with a vague and undefined distrust. Mildred's conduct after the arrival of Wilbur Whitting puzzled me. At first she was all smiles, and it seemed she was supremely happy, but soon a troubled expression came upon her face. I was convinced that Mildred was the victim of a secret sorrow, and I could not but connect her affianced husband with her unhappy state, since it had developed after his return.

As a detective I would have been interested in this singular affair, even had I not felt a deep fatherly interest in the welfare of the orphan girl, whose protector the law had made me. But I could not ask Mildred to unburden her heart to me. One thing I could do, though—I could watch Wilbur Whitting; and I did. I made some startling discoveries, and they amounted to this:

The affianced husband of my dear Mildred was a gambler, and, even worse, the associate of criminals. One night I was standing in the lobby of the Hoffman House, when I saw Wilbur Whitting and two other young men enter Stokes' bar-room. I knew the companions of young Whitting. One was Jerry Bolter, an ex-convict, and the other was a pal of the notorious Smith Whittaker, the safe-blower, or "Prince of the Gopher Men," as his associates called him.

I sauntered into the gilded saloon after the two young men and my ward's affianced. As they stood drinking at the bar, a few words of their conversation came to my ears quite distinctly.

"To-night at eleven. Red Mike's place in the Bowery," said Smith Whittaker.

"All right; I'll be there," answered Wilbur Whitting.

"We'll depend on you, then," put in Jerry Bolter.

"You can do so, my boys."

With this they separated. Wilbur Whitting went in the direction of my residence, where Mildred had made her home, since she returned from a seminary on the Hudson, where she had been educated. The two criminals pursued an opposite direction. I shadowed them. In my mind I was revolving an idea that had suddenly occurred to me. I thought, perhaps, the mystery of Mildred's secret trouble was solved.

"Perhaps she has learned the real character of her affianced, and while she loves him she fears for her future with such a man," I thought.

I had learned from those who had known Wil-

bur Whitting intimately prior to his departure to Europe, that he was a most upright and honorable young man. He must then have sadly degenerated during his absence. I kept the two criminals under surveillance until they entered a disreputable dive saloon in the lower part of the Bowery. When, at the appointed time, Wilbur Whitting arrived at the place and entered it, I did the same. It chanced that I had been in disguise when I saw my ward's affianced and his criminal associates enter Stokes' barroom in the Hoffman House. I wore the same costume now, and so I feared no recognition.

Wilbur Whitting passed through the barroom, and entered a room at its rear, which the barkeeper unlocked for him, and then relocked when he had entered. I caught sight of Bolter and Smith Whittaker in the rear room. I longed to learn the object of this secret meeting, for I felt sure that some villainy was being plotted, but it was impossible to gain an entrance to the room.

I lounged about the saloon as long as I dared, without exposing myself to suspicion, for the place was the resort of criminals, who are very quick to spot a "fly-cop," as they called the detectives. Finally I passed out to the street. Not twenty minutes later three men came out. They were in disguise, but their voices betrayed them to me.

"Wilbur Whitting, Bolter and Whittaker," I said, mentally.

"I don't know, boys, as I ought to run the risk of detection by taking a hand in the work you have laid out for to-night, for I'm sure of a fortune with the detective's ward, and I've no call for any more of this work," said Whitting.

"That's so; but you like the cold dollars, and you'll need some of them before your wedding-day," said Whittaker.

"True," assented Whitting.

"Are you sure Katholina is dead?" suddenly asked Bolter.

"Yes. Did we not have Viva's word for that before we left Europe? But why do you ask?" said Whitting.

"I could almost swear I saw the face of Katholina look out of the window of a carriage that passed me to-day. She is a revengeful woman, and if she should yet be living, she may seek to block your little game."

"I tell you she is dead," said Whitting.

With this they passed on, and I heard no more. They took their way to a private residence on East 31st street. I crept along on the opposite side of the street. Glancing up at the number of the house in front of which I had taken my stand, I saw what it was, and consequently knew what the number of the house the criminals had halted before must be.

"Good heavens!" I muttered, "how do these fellows find out where plunder is to be found?"

It would never do to let them enter the house. I crossed the street and blew a shrill whistle. I was aware that I could not arrest three persons alone. Instantly the burglars rushed from the house. I crouched down close beside the fence. They passed me, but the affianced of Mildred, who came last, saw me. Quick as thought he whipped out a knife and made a leap at me. It was a case of necessity. My revolver cracked, and a bullet went crashing through the hand that grasped the



knife. Then I dashed away. I was not pursued. Next day I met Mildred in the library.

"Mildred," I said, "something troubles you. Will you not trust me by telling me what it is? Remember, my child, I have your best good at heart. I would fill to you the place of a father."

"How shall I begin?" she said, after a moment or so of silence. "Let me see," she went on. "From the first day of Wilbur's return he puzzled me. There was something about him unlike the Wilbur I had promised to marry. Do you believe he could have changed in his nature, or could have forgotten many little things that occurred before he went to Europe?"

"I hardly think so," I answered.

"The more I have thought of this the more troubled I have become, and now, at last, I have arrived at the startling conclusion that Wilbur Whitting is not the Wilbur Whitting to whom I was engaged before he left for Europe."

The time to tell her of the discoveries I had made regarding the character of Wilbur Whitting had come, and I was glad that our conversation had led to that point. I told Mildred all. She was startled.

"This mystery must be cleared up; I will see Wilbur no more until all is explained. Though it breaks my heart to do so, I will tell him our engagement is at an end," Mildred said earnestly.

"No, no; you must not do that. I have a plan which will, I trust, bring everything out right. Be guided by me. Treat Wilbur as of old; say not a word of what you have learned," I advised.

Mildred consented. A terrible possibility had occurred to me. I believed now that the man whom we had received as Wilbur Whitting was an impostor, and the question arose: What had become of the real Wilbur Whitting?—granting that my suspicion was correct. Undoubtedly he was the victim of foul play. It might be that he had met his death. That very day I arrested Bolter. I had proof enough of his complicity in a daring robbery recently committed to send him "up the river" for ten years. I meant to use him to help ferret out the mystery of Wilbur Whitting. Alone with the burglar in his cell, I said:

"If you will help me in a certain matter, I'll fix it so you can turn State's evidence and get clear."

"Done," said Bolter.

"You know a woman called Katholina?"

"I do."

"Describe her to me?"

He did so.

"Now, tell me who this woman really is?"

Bolter hesitated.

"You won't give me away as your informant?"

"No, I will not."

"Very well; the woman is really the wife of Wilbur Whitting."

This was all Bolter could tell me. I left him, and for three weeks myself and twelve other detectives were constantly on the lookout for a woman answering Bolter's description of Whitting's wife. It was the day before the night set for Mildred's marriage, when at last I met the woman I had searched for so long face to face on Broadway. I was sure of her identity the moment I saw her, but to make assurance doubly sure I addressed her.

"Katholina," I said. She turned quickly and

said in English, with a marked French accent:

"You call my name. Who are you?"

"A friend. I can help you find your husband," I replied.

The lady was greatly agitated, but she took my arm, and I conducted her to my office, where she told me that her husband was an American, whom she had married in Paris two years previous. She was poor but beautiful, and her husband soon tired of her and ill-treated her. A few months before she had been assaulted and stabbed while returning from a cafe to her rooms alone. The assassin left her for dead, but she was taken to the hospital, and finally recovered.

When she left the hospital she could for a long time find no trace of her husband, whose name was Leslie Burton, but at last she learned he had sailed for New York. As she concluded the narrative, the substance of which we have given, I heard Wilbur Whitting's step on the stairs, and I placed Katholina behind a screen, telling her that I believed her husband was coming, but that she must not on any account betray herself. Presently Whitting entered the office. We conversed for awhile on unimportant topics, and then he left. Katholina rushed forth.

"It is he, my faithless husband, upon whom I would be revenged," she said.

That night, just before the time for Whitting's marriage with Mildred came, he was alone with the woman whom he meant to betray. The rascal's arm encircled Mildred's waist, for the brave girl, though she knew all, consented to play the part I had assigned her to the end. Suddenly the door opened, and Katholina appeared in full evening dress, as she had come to the house as one of the wedding guests.

"Leslie Burton, I denounce you as an impostor!" she cried.

Then she entered the room, and I followed her.

"Blame you!" gritted the foiled villain, and he felt for a pistol. Quick as a flash I "covered" him, and at a signal from me one of my assistants darted into the room, and handcuffed him. At the same moment there came a surprise for me. A young man, so like Burton that you could hardly tell the difference between them, rushed into the room.

"I am Wilbur Whitting!" he cried.

Mildred sprang into his arms. The real Wilbur had come at last. He told how he had made the acquaintance of Burton in Italy, where he had soon after been kidnapped by brigands, as he now believed at Burton's instigation.

#### THE JAPANESE INVASION.

The frequently and foolishly talked of possibility of Japanese raids on our Pacific coast is nothing less than silly. For invasion, a vast fleet of transports must be ready. No country maintains transports for such service; liners and commercial ships must be withdrawn and converted for transport use. Such withdrawal would be known immediately the world over, and the length of time necessary in getting the transports ready for service would give ample time to prevent any threatened invasion. Moreover, should troops by any chance be landed, the enormous preponderance of our fleet would cut the line of communications with Japan. It is an established principle that no nation will trust its troops at sea until the control of the sea has been established.



## CURRENT NEWS

## FIND SKULL OF SWEDE ABOUT 9,000 YEARS OLD

The skull of the oldest Scandinavian has been unearthed at Ro, in the Swedish province of Bohuslan. According to Dr. H. Hagg of the Stockholm Rigs museum and Professor C. M. Furst, it is the only known human skull of the Ancylus period, 9,000 years ago, when the Baltic was a fresh water lake, and Southern Sweden, with the Danish Islands, were joined up with continental Europe. Dr. K. Jessen, Danish geologist, has confirmed the theory that the skull probably belongs to one of the oldest inhabitants of northern Europe. Ancylus is the Latin name of a small crustacean which roamed the shores of the Baltic Lake in those remote times.

## BIRDS INVADE VILLAGE

Wild pheasants are walking the streets of Princeton Village, Mass.; the canny crow has discarded his wariness and is haunting the farm yards, and partridges and other shy birds are leaving their wild homes in search of food.

One of the rarest and shyest of all American birds, the giant pileated woodpecker—black excepting for its scarlet topnot—was seen boring a great hole in a highly prized pine tree at the summer cottage of former Representative Charles G. Washburn.

Through the Audubon Society an appeal has been made to people in suburbs to feed these starving birds.

## STORY OF EVE AND SERPENT IS TRUE, SYNOD DECLARES

The chapter of Genesis referring to Adam and Eve, the serpent and the tree of knowledge must be interpreted literally, says the report of the commission of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, which has been trying the Rev. J. H. Geelkerken for heresy. The report stipulates that the clergyman, to retain his status with the synod, must sign an undertaking accepting this conclusion.

Some time ago Dr. Geelkerken preached a sermon which the synod believed cast doubt on the Genesis story of Eve and the serpent. He was brought to trial late in January to answer charges of heresy. Twelve professors of theology and fifty elders assembled to judge the case.

Some German churches sent delegates to watch the trial, it being regarded as vital for the future of the Calvinistic faith, for which, the opponents of Dr. Geelkerken emphasized, thousands died in Holland's seventy years' war with Spain.

## WHY IS GOLD CALLED PRECIOUS?

Gold is called one of the precious metals because of its beautiful color, its lustre, and the fact that it does not rust or tarnish when exposed to the air. It is the most ductile (can be stretched out in the thinnest wire), and is also the most malleable (can be hammered out into the thinnest sheet). It can be hammered into leaves so thin that light will pass through them. Pure gold is

so soft that it cannot be used in that form in making gold coins or in making jewelry. Other substances, generally copper, are added to it to make the gold coins and jewelry hard. Sometimes silver is also added to the gold with copper. The gold coins of the United States are made of nine parts of gold to one of copper. The coins of France are the same, while the coins of England are made of eleven parts of gold to one of copper. The gold used for jewelry and watch cases varies from eight or nine to eighteen carats fine.

Another reason why gold is called a precious metal is that it is very difficult to dissolve it. None of the acids alone will dissolve gold, and only two of them when mixed together will do so. There are nitric acid and hydrochloric acid. When these two acids are mixed and gold put into the mixture the gold will disappear.—*Book of Wonders.*

## SNAKE POISON.

It is said that about half a drop of Indian cobra venom is sufficient to kill a man. That means that a full sized cobra would be able to eject enough venom at a single full and complete bite to kill about twenty persons. The Indian cobra yields as many as twenty drops, and there is of record one specimen that gave as many as twenty-eight drops.

In experiments with the venom of the cobra of the Cape in Africa, it was found that one drop diluted in a little water and injected into the tissues of the leg of a large monkey killed it in half an hour's time. A fraction of a drop was sufficient to kill a rat within an hour. Judging from the effect of cobravenom on the higher animals, it is held that one full drop is a fatal dose for a strong, healthy man.

The deadly power of snake poison has been shown in some curious ways. Of these perhaps none is more extraordinary than that of the Chinaman who, while gathering grapes in the vineyard of a Californian, was bitten by a rattler.

The unfortunate man was immediately given the usual remedies, and as an additional measure his injured arm was placed in a bath filled with strong native brandy, the expectation being that the spirit would aid in dissolving the poison from the wound. Nevertheless, in a short time the man died.

The point of the incident lies in the fact that the employer, wishing to make sure that the Chinaman kept his arm well soaked in the liquid, held it down in the brandy with his own hand.

He was not aware that there was any scratch upon his skin, yet he was poisoned, and for a long time was dreadfully ill. He finally recovered, but only after much suffering. Only a tiny part of the poison could have become dissolved by the four gallons of brandy, yet it was apparently enough to inoculate the owner to a dangerous extent.

One authority on snakes has declared that the venom of the rattler will affect even vegetables. Having inoculated various varieties with a point of a lancet, he found them the next day withered and dead, looking as if they had been struck by lightning.



## FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

### FROM EVERYWHERE

#### ALARMED BY MICE.

Fire that destroyed a grocery store on the first floor of a building at Dunbar, Scotland, drove upstairs hundreds of mice which awoke the occupants of the top story just in time for them to escape with their lives.

#### TWO WEEKS OF HICCOUGHS KILL STAMFORD MAN

An attack of hiccoughs that physicians could not overcome resulted in the death of Charles J. Kling, train dispatcher for the New Haven Railroad at the Grand Central Terminal. Mr. Kling was a widower. He is survived by five children ranging in age from seven to twenty-one years.

Mr. Kling had worked for the New Haven since his boyhood. He lived here at 39 Suburban Avenue.

Mr. Kling began hiccoughing several weeks ago. Efforts of physicians to stop his cough were ineffective.

#### FLAPPER HOSE BLAMED IN PNEUMONIA DEATHS

Inadequate heating and ventilating were blamed by Dr. Harry Goldman of the Department of Health for 60 per cent. of the pneumonia deaths in this city.

Doctor Goldman spoke to the Advisory Committee of the Heating and Ventilating Exposition at the exposition headquarters in the Hotel McAlpin. He listed 2,450 deaths from pneumonia since the first of the year.

"Considering the recklessness of our present-day flappers, 'it is surprising that there are as few deaths from pneumonia as there are. You see them on the streets in slippers and gauze stockings in the coldest weather, and they wonder why they have colds. They should at least live in homes which have the even temperature to combat the chill to which they have been exposed.'"

#### RUSSIA'S CHILD VAGRANTS ORGANIZE BANDITS' UNIONS

Following literally the Communist slogan, "Workers of the World, unite!" groups of the vagrant children who flood Russia have formed themselves into local "trade unions" and "guilds."

In the Shidrink district of the Urals the street gamins have organized a "pickpocket trust," the specialty of which is evident. In Ekaterinburg groups of homeless boys who have specialized in petty larcenies have organized the "Young Bandits' Union."

The town of Briansk, capital of the province of that name, has been divided by the mendicant children into wards, each ward being governed by a commission of five "juvenile directors," and no member is allowed to trespass in the ward of another. Among the "unions" established by parentless children in Moscow the strangest is the "Amalgamated Brotherhood of Young Pigeon Thieves." Only those who have shown special

aptitude in stealing birds and reselling them are eligible for membership.

#### MAN BURNED TO DEATH IN CAVERN DISTILLERY

In a cave near Athens, O., reached by a fifty-foot passageway 14 inches high Prohibition officers found the charred body of Frank Lenigar, twenty-six, and the unconscious form of his brother, Amos, twenty-three.

People living in the vicinity had reported "there was something queer" in the cave. The dead man apparently had been overcome by fumes from a gasoline stove used to operate a still, then burned in an explosion of the stove.

The cave was elaborately fitted up for making liquor. Six barrels of mash were found. Everything bulky, the officers said, must have been knocked down, carried into the chamber and assembled there.

#### RARE TUSCUMBIA (ALA.) STAMP BRINGS \$520

The philatelic collection of Edward K. Warren, a private collector of New York, brought \$10,397.85 at its sale recently.

A very rare Tuscumbia, Ala., 1858, 3-cent stamp, dull red on buff, went to Stanley Gibbons for \$520. This was the day's highest price. Mr. Gibbons also paid \$135 for an official \$5 stamp of the State Department, green and black, unused, and \$100 for a semi-official issue, 1851-58 Charleston, S. C. (2-cent) on bluish (1858) on part of 3-cent envelope, pen cancellation.

The Economist Stamp Company paid \$210 for a similar issue, Kingsman's (1832) light pencil cancellation. The company also paid \$130 for a St. Louis, 1846, 10-cent, black on gray-lilac paper (24), canceled with red postmark, and \$105 each for Confederate States provisional issues, Macon, Ga., 5-cent, yellow (79), on original envelope, and also for a Memphis, Tenn., 5-cent, red on orange (93), entire envelope, from the Seybold collection.

W. C. Hawkins paid \$210 for a semi-official issue, 1849-50, Philadelphia, 1-cent, on blue glazed paper, on original cover addressed to New York, once owned by John F. Seybold. Eugene Klein paid \$130 for a semi-official issue, 1851-58, Charleston, S. C. (2-cent), on bluish (1828), pen-canceled on original cover with 3-cent (1851).

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## INTERESTING ARTICLES

## AMERICA'S ACTIVE VOLCANO.

The only active volcano in the United States is Lassen Peak, in the Lassen Volcanic National Park, California. Although its last eruption occurred on May 22, 1915, steaming mud pots may be observed in its crater.

## LIGHT ALARM.

A new thing in burglar alarms consists of an apparatus which is sensitive to any form of light. If the intruder should carry a flashlight or lantern or switch on the light in the room the apparatus is placed, an alarm will ring at once.

## NINE-YEAR-OLD ROUTS ALL SPELLING TEST LISTS

Joseph Abraham, nine-year-old Syrian boy, whose parents labor in a packing plant at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is regarded by Donald Durrell, psychologist of the University of Iowa, who conducted a mental test on him, as a wonder as a

speller. This lad is not only the champion speller of his school but he spells better than the average adult with higher education, according to the psychologist, and is able to spell down many college students.

He has spelled every word in the Ayres scale test of 1,000 words, the test of the Russell Sage Foundation, the Packer, Horn and Thorndike lists prepared by the University of Iowa, and the hardest words in the dictionary.

One of the problems which mystified the psychologist was the mental processes which the boy seems to employ in his spelling. He does not study the lists, merely reading them over, and the tests do not show that he uses the visual imagery so common with others. In general mental rating the boy is regarded as "superior," though not in any sense a "prodigy."

He reads books beyond his years and recently read a book of Russian Tales of 323 pages in three days.

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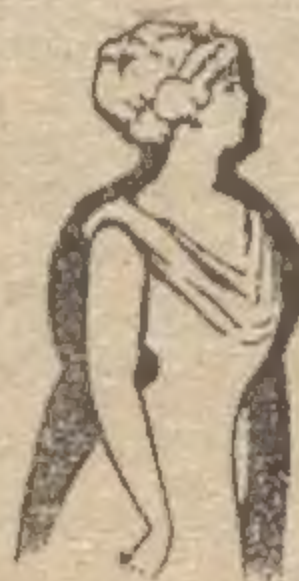
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